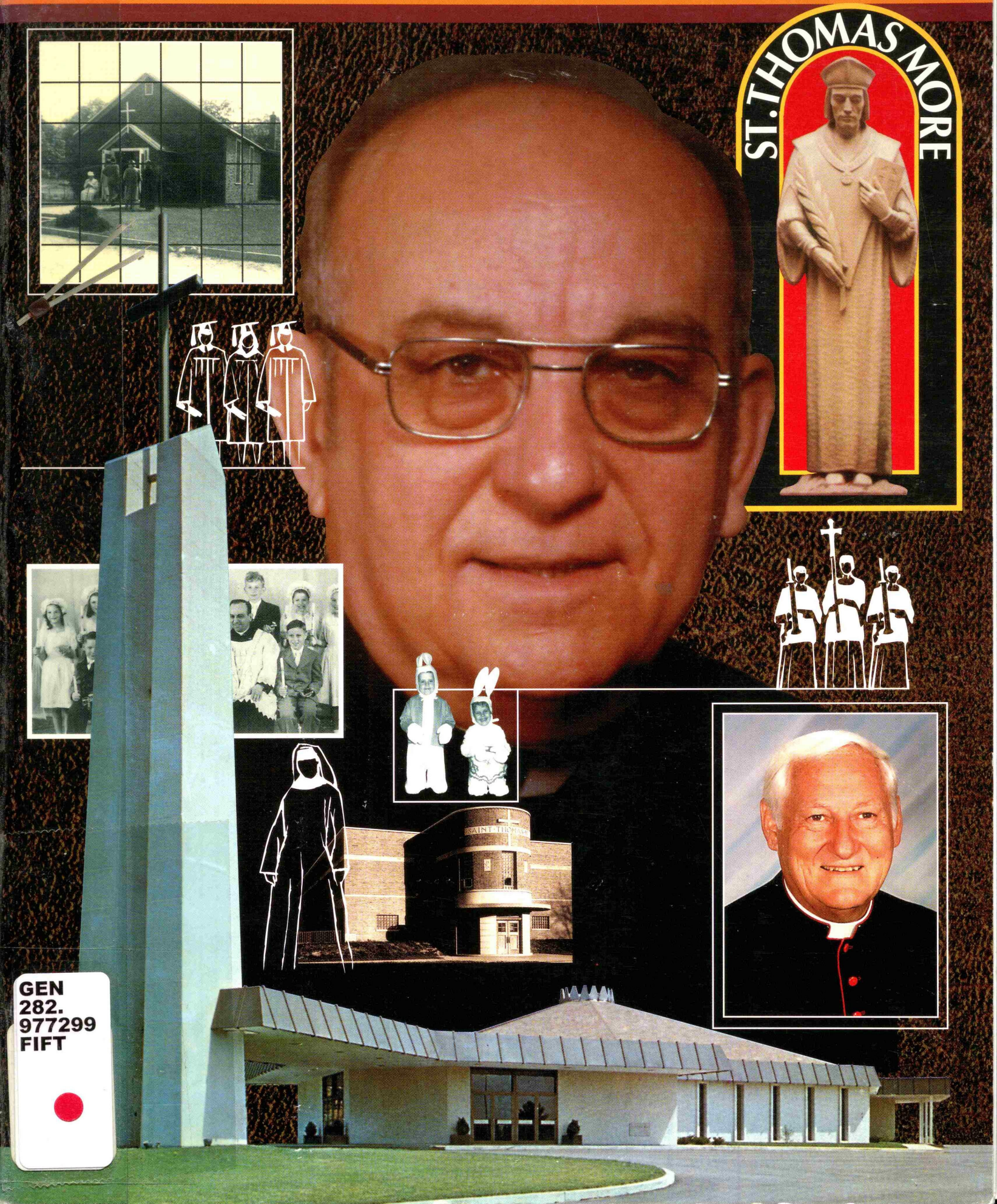
50th ANNIVERSARY • 1945-1995



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St. Thomas More Parish Celebrates 50 Years of Faith

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In The Beginning

Beginnings are always most fascinating and the archives reveal the chief players and a time-line of events. Let's go back to the 40's. The pastor of the Ridge area was Father Leo Hildebrandt. His assistant at St. Mary, Griffith was Father Robert Weis. Both were convinced about the need of a parish in Munster and eventually convinced Bishop Noll of Fort Wayne.

Follow the two priests in these excerpts:

Letter (2-24-45) Bishop Noll to Father Hildebrandt.

"If Father Weis would have time, while serving as your assistant, to take a survey of the Munster area, I would be willing officially to delegate him to do this. It would be good for him to solicit a subscription from the people he visits toward a church to be built in the future."

From February to September, 1945, Father Weis began this survey and collection with great energy and enthusiasm.

Letter (9-5-45) Hildebrandt to Noll

"A Munster Catholic has property the size of a city block and is willing to sell the church about half of it, three acres for $8,000. The property is worth it and the location is as good as can be found. So the time has come to make a definite decision about Munster. Will the diocese loan the Munster parish about $15,000 on the usual terms?

Father Weis has on hand some 150 names of Catholic families living there. All signs point to a building boom in all the towns that skirt other larger cities of the Calumet Region.

So please make a definite decision right now. If a loan is not made, we may as well forget the entire Munster project."

Letter (9-12-45) Noll to Hildebrandt

"I certainly hope that you do not believe that I have changed my mind because of any kind of pressure. I suggest that you buy the amount of property required. I would think that three acres would be as much or more property than you would need."

Letter (9-21-45) Chancellor Feltes to Hildebrandt

"I am enclosing a check in the sum of $8,000 and a note to cover the loan. I do not recall whether the Munster parish has a name or not, and so I made the note out in the name of St. Mary Church."

AFTER ALL THIS AND MORE...

Letter (10-2-45) Noll to Father Weis

"I am herewith appointing you to direct the formation of a new parish in the Munster area. You are free, even while you serve as assistant to Father Hildebrandt, to gather a census and funds from the Munster people, and to regard them as all under your jurisdiction from the date of this appointment.

I recommend that you have a sign painted and erected on the property bearing the inscription THE SITE FOR A NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH. This might induce some people to purchase property in that district."

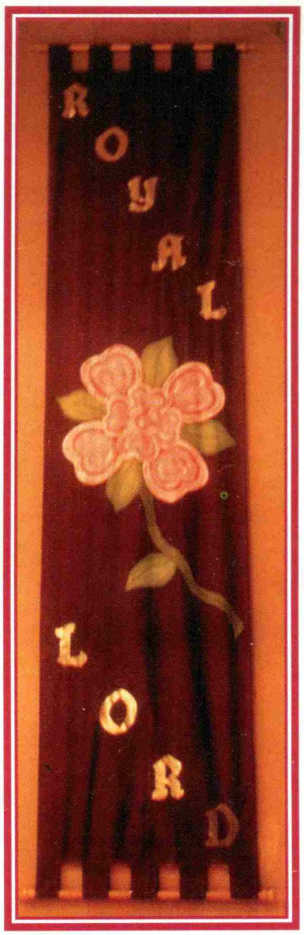
These two priests were "movers and shakers." Their convictions and determination started St. Thomas More Parish. With Father Hildebrandt as a mentor, young Father Weis rolled up his sleeves and set the foundations of this parish. Did he realize that besides being the FOUNDER of the parish, he would also be PASTOR of FORTY of the Fifty Years????

From Longfellow's "THE BUILDING OF THE SHIP"

Build me straight, O worthy Master!
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!

Our remembering of FIFTY YEARS is to remember MONSIGNOR ROBERT B. WEIS... FOUNDER AND PASTOR!!!

The More Family Coat of Arms



The Lancaster Rose

Ten years before the founding of St. Thomas More parish in 1945, Pope Pius XI declared Thomas More a SAINT on May 19, 1935. Young Father Robert Weis was among many who were inspired by this distinguished Catholic layman of the 16th century...He chose this new saint to be the patron of the new parish in Munster.

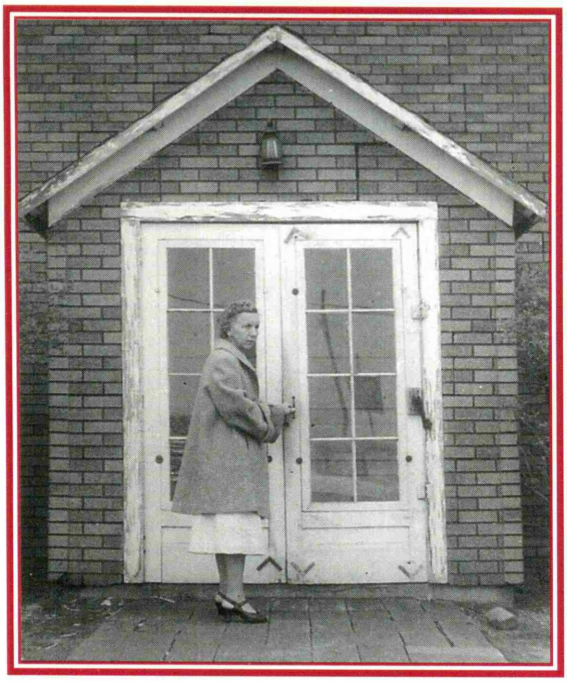
It was an excellent choice not only because everyone could relate to his holiness, but to the multiplicity of callings in which that holiness was lived...Thomas More's life reveals a man of spiritual stature and moral integrity in a broad spectrum of experiences...as...a...

Staunch Catholic — *Devoted Husband*
Loving Father — *Eminent Scholar*
Prolific Author — *Model Lawyer*
Trustworthy Ambassador — *Loyal Lord Chancellor*
Courageous Martyr

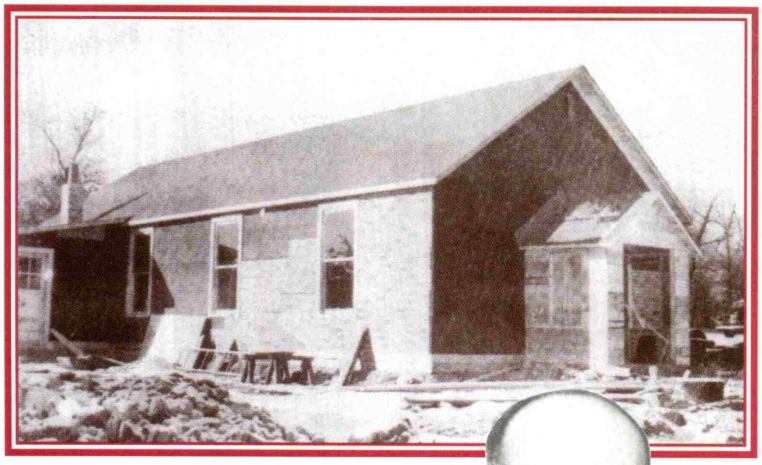
His last words before his martyrdom on July 6, 1535 testify to the primacy of the Catholic Faith in his life:

"I die the King's good servant, but GOD'S FIRST"

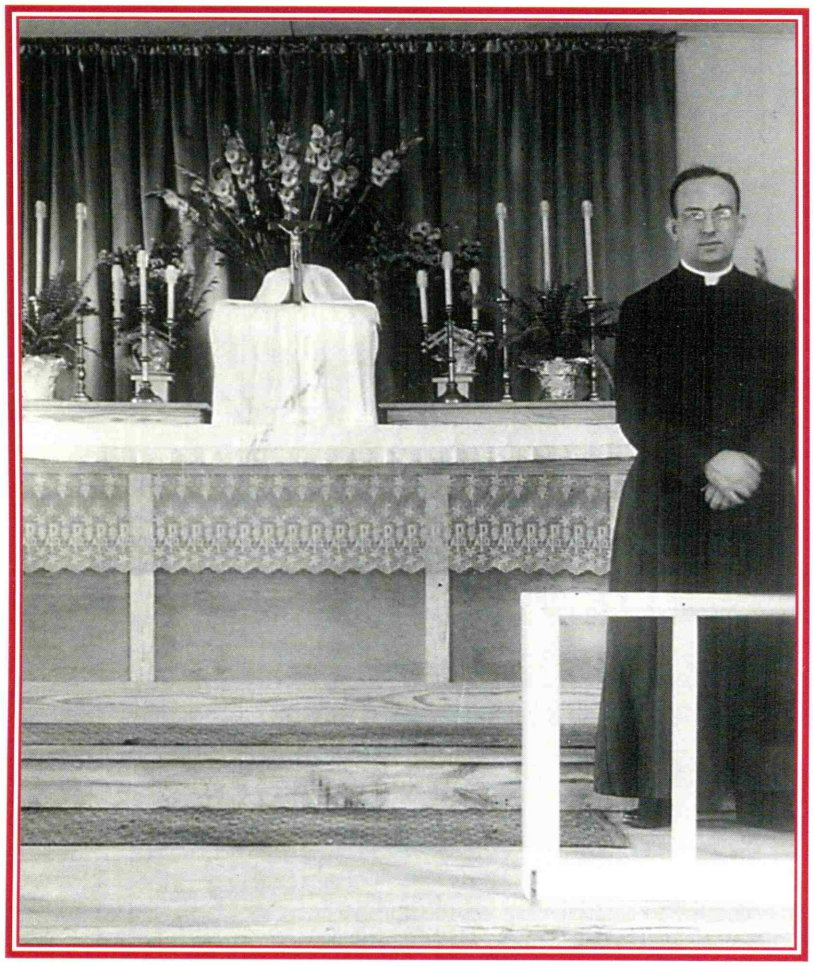
After FIFTY YEARS, it seems that Father Weis made a good choice. Like our patron saint, our FOUNDER and PASTOR for FORTY YEARS was also a "Man For All Seasons" in his many talents and broad range of interests, but above all in his priestly dedication to the LORD and HIS CHURCH...



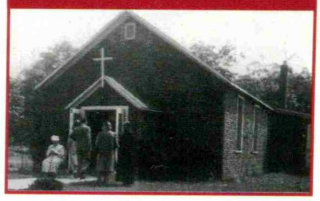
Gert Milne in front of the first Church.



Many willing hands and hours of toil built our first Church.



Father Weis at the altar of the first Church.



February 25, 1946, the new church was ready for its first mass. It was a frame rectangular building covered with asbestos brick shingles. It did not have all the comforts of more modern churches. The pews were wooden chairs, and the kneelers were unpadded. It was, however, warm and attractive in a simple way, and the parishioners were proud of their accomplishment.

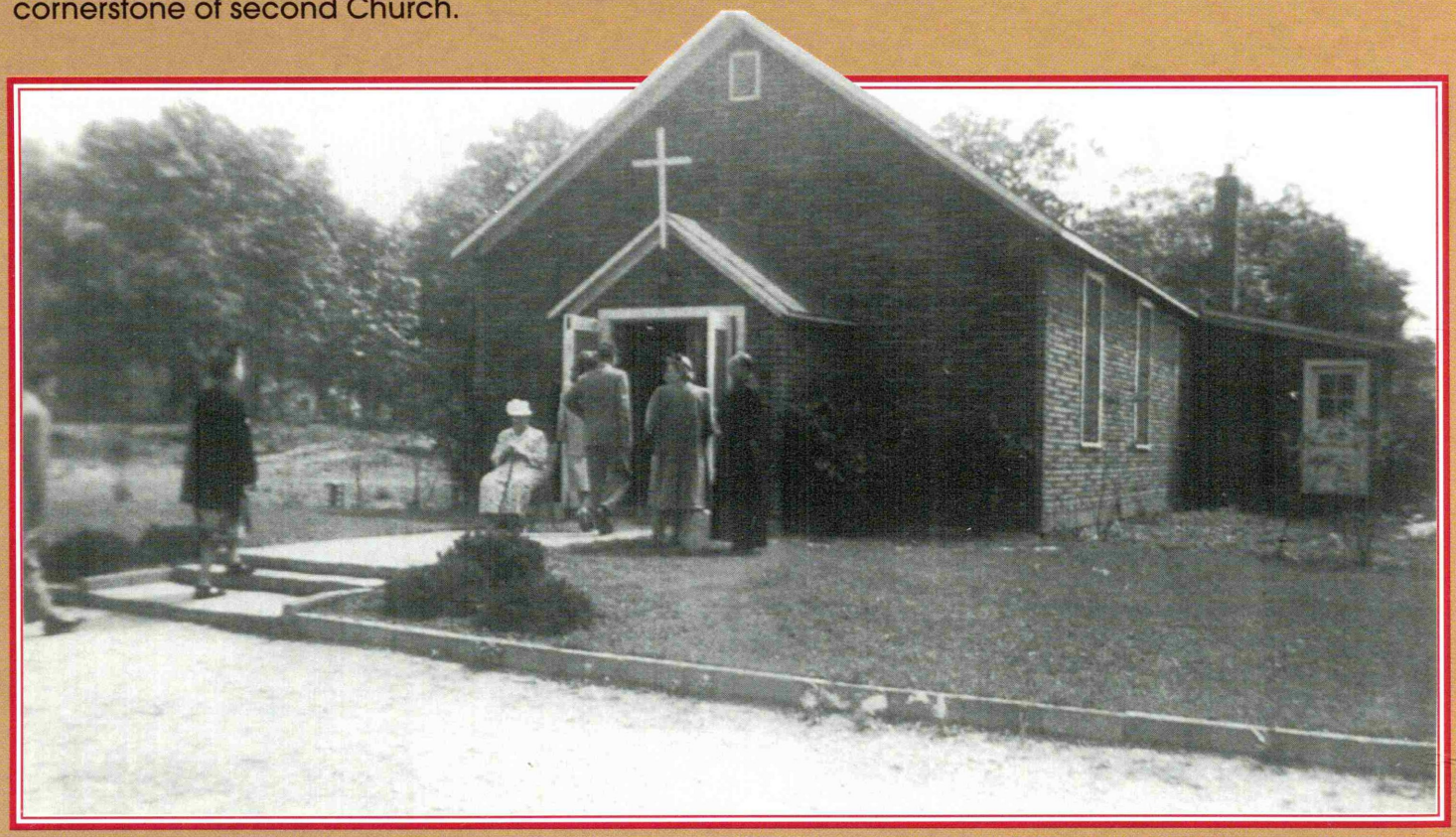
Father Bob leaving the Church on a winter afternoon.

First Holy Communion, June16, 1946.

The Mills and Milne children at cornerstone of second Church.

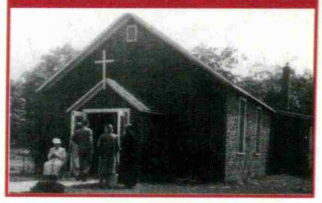
The Mills and Helfen Children at cornerstone of second Church.

Melvin and Luella Nondorf wedding reception at the American Legion Hall.



Parishioners in front of the first Church.

1948-1949



On June 20, 1948, Monsignor E. J. Mungovan, Vicar General of the Diocese of Fort Wayne, blessed the cornerstone of the new church and school. Shown with him are Fr. Hildebrandt, Fr. Weis, James Turner, Architect.

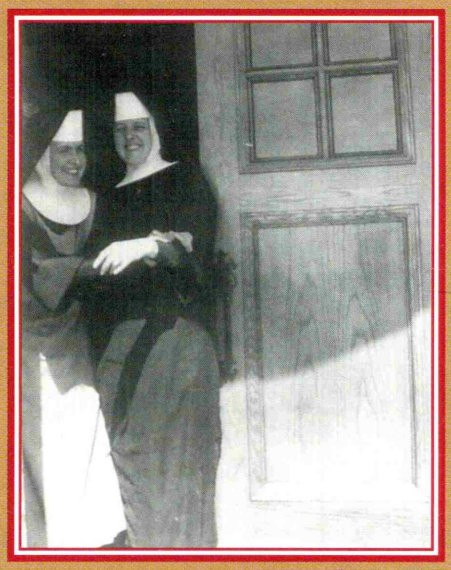
Bishop Noll with Msgr. Reinig at dedication of the second Church.

The second Church/School/Convent.

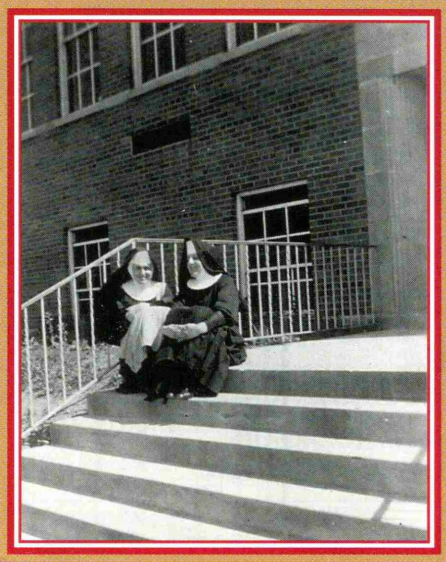
First and Second Grade - 1950

Third and Fourth Grade - 1950

The First Holy Communion class of the new school.

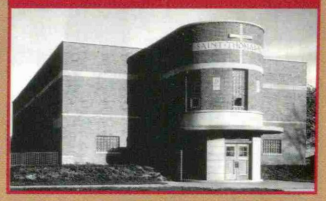


Sisters Mary Jean and Antonia at the school entrance. Sister Mary Jean Feeney was the first school principal.

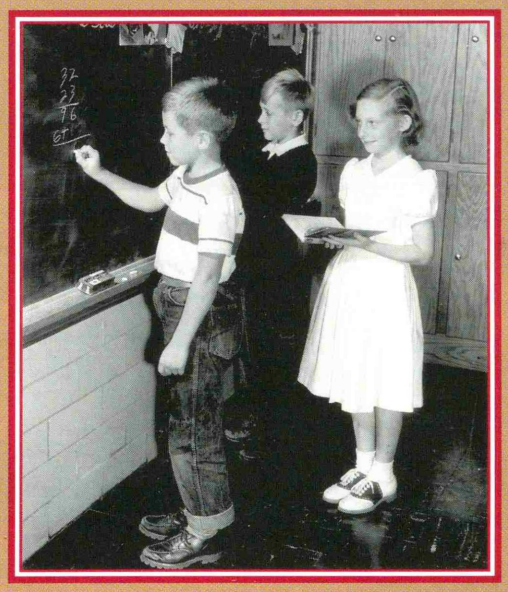


Sisters Mary Jean and Antonia on the steps to the school.

1949-1950

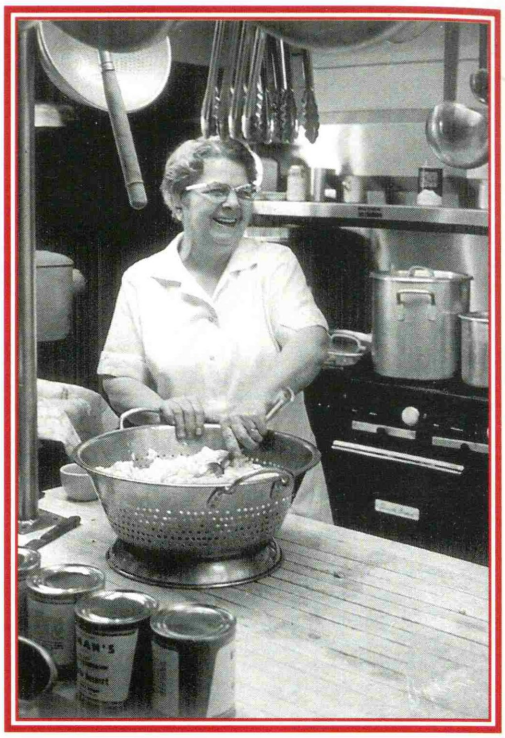


On Palm Sunday, April 10, 1949, The First Mass was offered in the new church. On this occasion, Father Weis announced that the Sisters of St. Benedict would staff the new school in September, 1949. Frank and Mary Galvin arranged for the Sisters from Nauvoo to teach at St. Thomas More. The Galvins are charter members of the church.



Joan Bridgman, Louis Keen, and Lawrence Nau are solving problems at the board.

Grades 2 and 3 - 1951

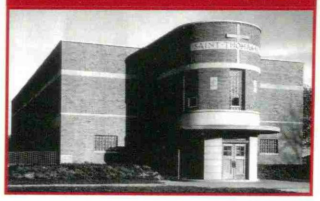


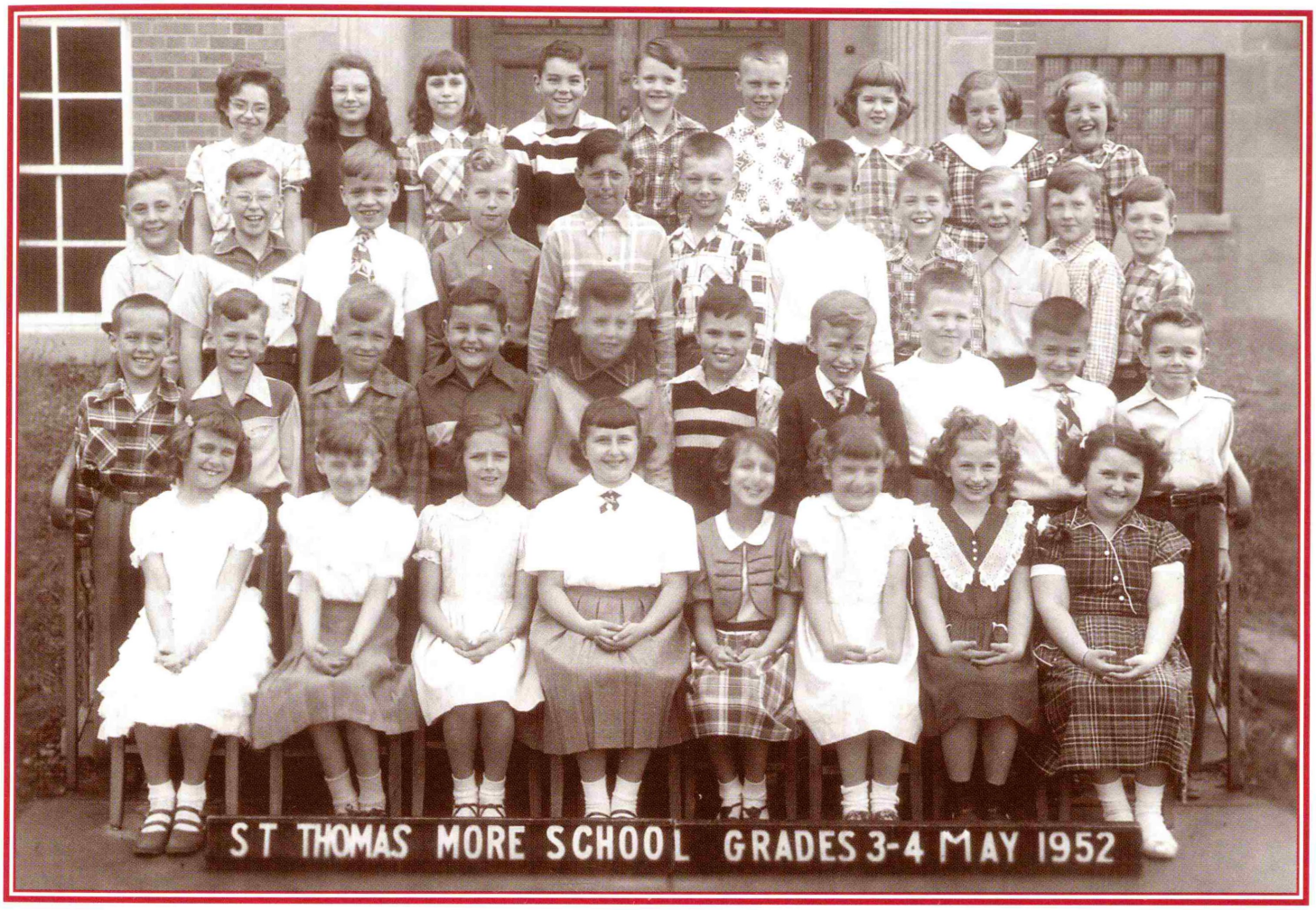
Vi Anzur, Cafeteria Manager

School Christmas party

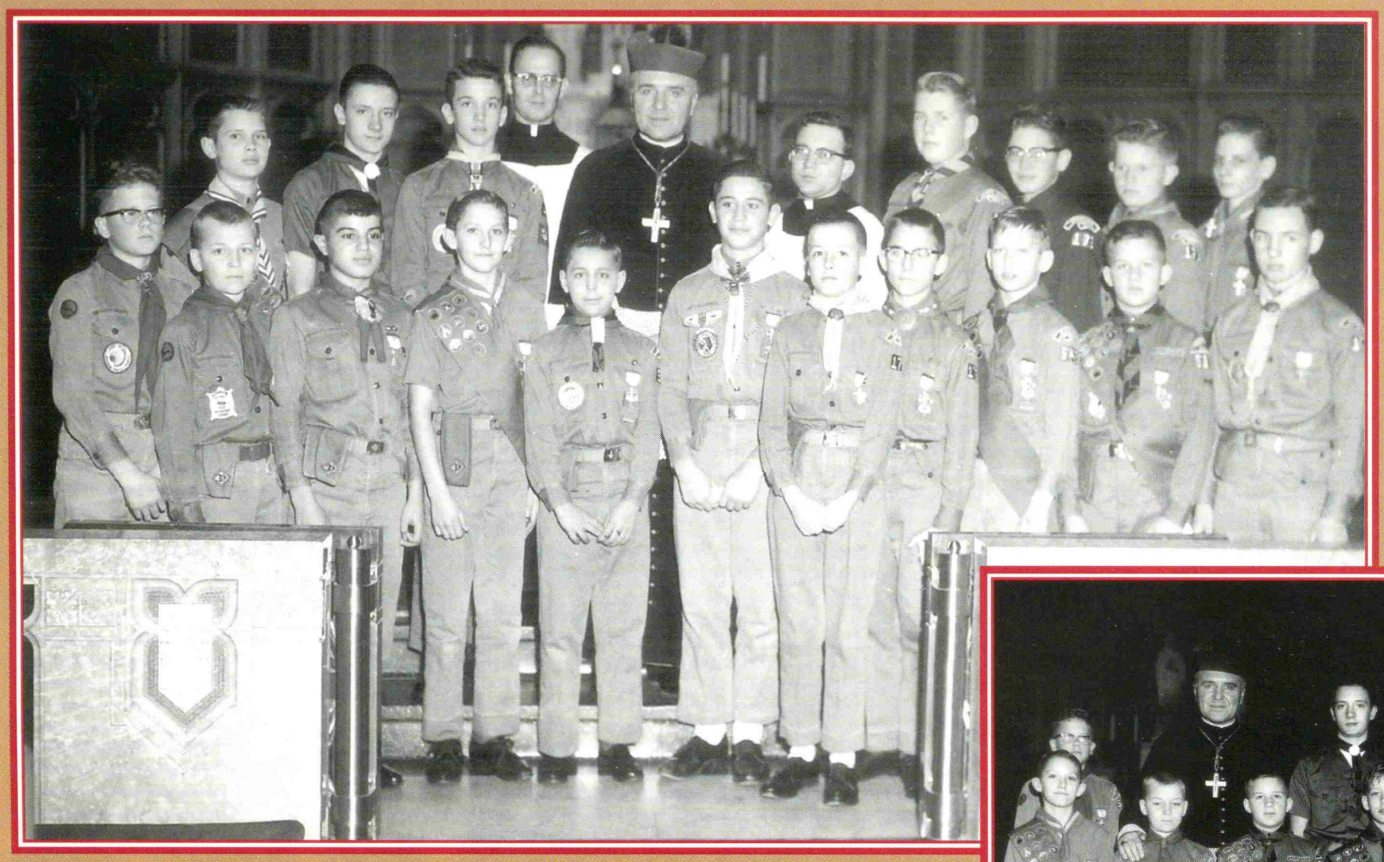
Rev. Leo Hildebrandt talks with Evelyn O'Hern, President of the Altar and Rosary Society, at the installation ceremonies.

1951-1952

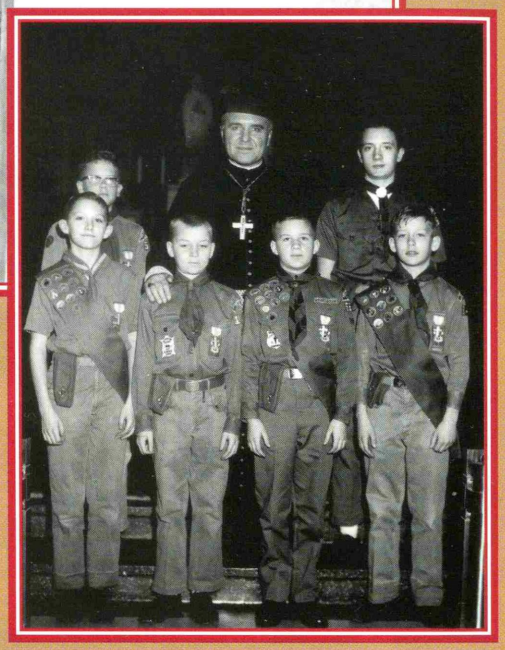




The Sisters have a picnic in their backyard.

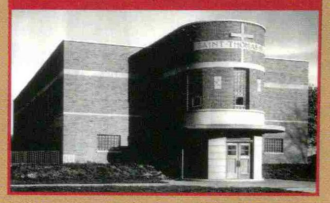


Bishop Grutka at Boy Scout Troop Awards.



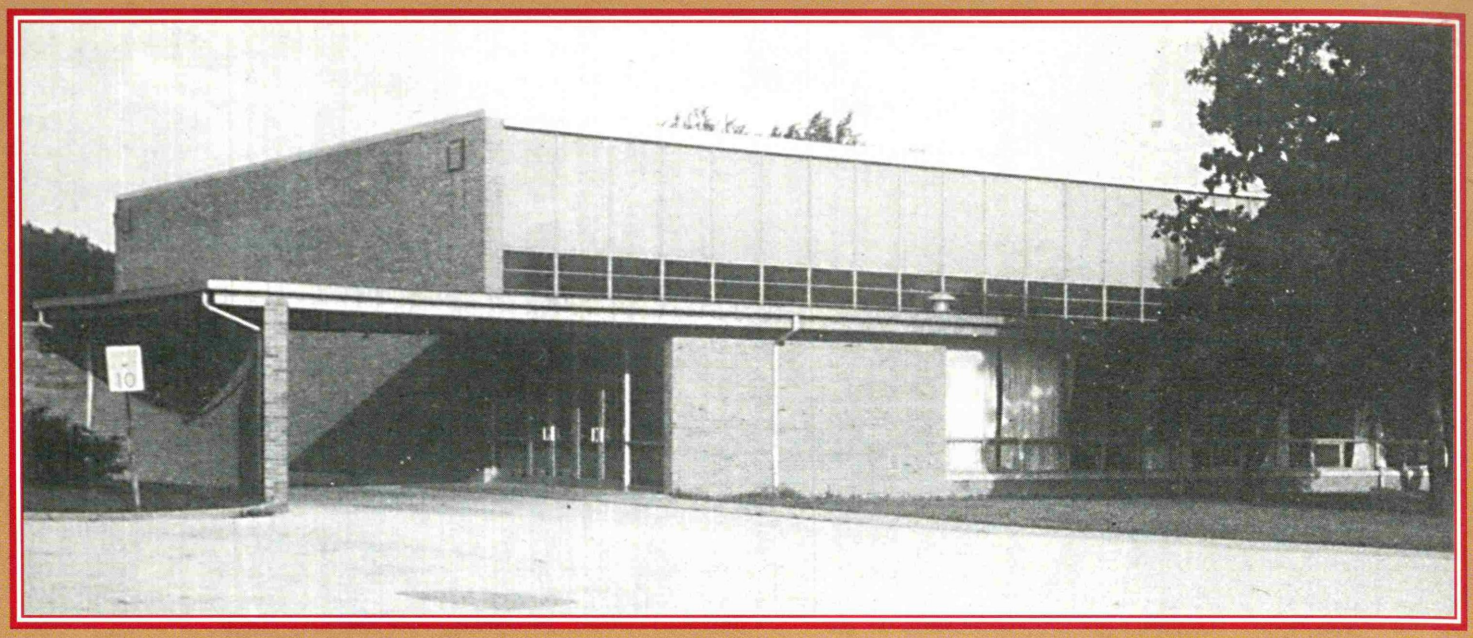
Bishop Pursley with Fr. Weis, Msgr. Jansen and Sister Eleanor, Second Principal.

1953-1954



Sister Genna with her 1954 class.

The Peter Rabbit Piano Recital, 1954.



Dr. Michael Tilka was Chairman of a committee to raise funds for a new gym and activities center. Members were Ray Schaub, Joe Cloughessy, H. P. Gahagan, Elmer Jusko, James Turner - Architect and Roy Clark - Contractor.

3rd grade First Holy Communion - 1955.

Women's Choir - 1955.

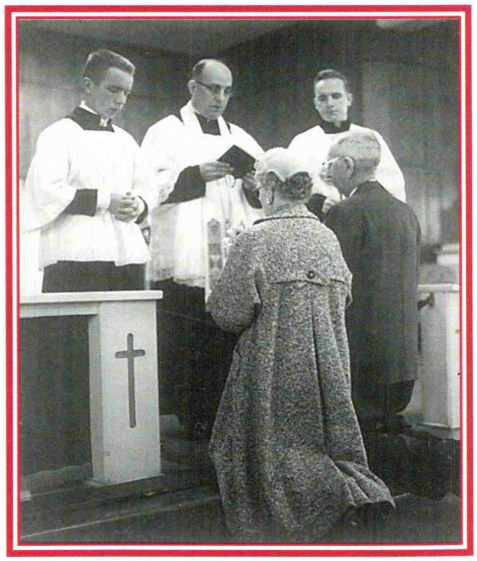
School Band.

The 8th grade students at the nation's capitol with Sister Julianne and Sister Jane.

Sister (Angela) Charlotte, music teacher.

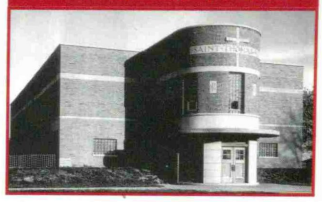
Second grade class - 1957

School Band - 1957



Anna and Ernest Mills renewing marriage vows - 1957. The Milne brothers are the Altar Boys.

1957-1958



St. Thomas More Graduates - 1957

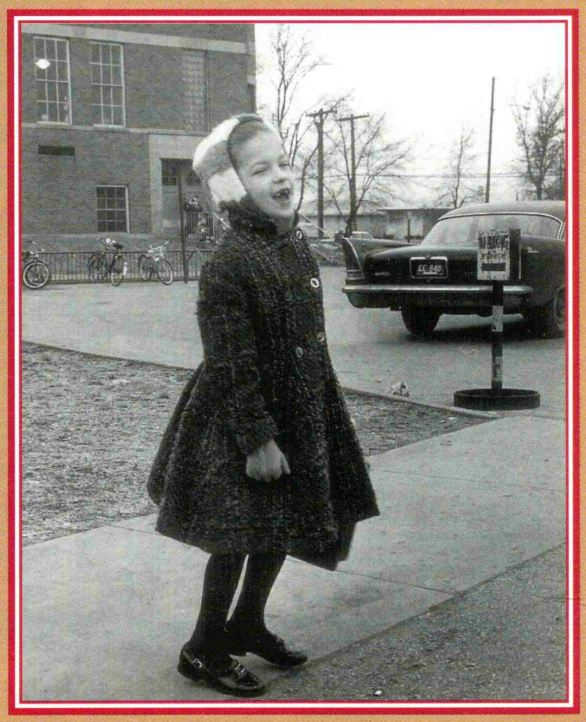
St. Thomas More Graduates - 1958

Sister Borgia's 3rd grade class.

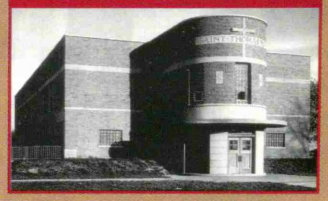
Evelyn O'Hern's 3rd grade class.

Sister Rosaria with students - last day of school - 1959.

Leslie Rudzinski waiting for a ride.



1959-1960



First Holy Communion - 1960

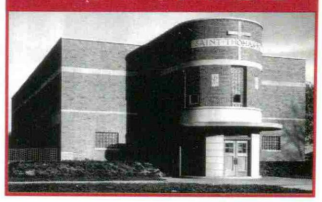
The Altar and Rosary Society Board: Pearl Feathergill, Helen Styles and son, Jimmy, Shirley Miller and Helen Morris.

Cub Scout Awards with Tom Nolan, Tom Pope, Fr. Weis and Joe Knesek.

Candi Jusko, an eighth grade student at St. Thomas More, awarded second place in the Hammond Times Spelling Bee.

Parochial pupils won 8 of 9 places in this contest.

1961-1963



THE HAMMOND TIMES

Write Top Essays on Religion

Bishop Andrew G. Grutka of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Gary will present awards to two eighth grade students of St. Thomas More parochial school in Munster, winners in the 1962 essay contest sponsored by the Serra Club of the Calumet Region.

The presentation will take place at the organization's annual Pastors' Night dinner and program in the Panel Room of St. John Parochial Center in Whiting next Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

• • •

WINNERS of the 1962 awards are John Canning, boys' division, and Susan Hutchens, girls' division. Theme of the essay contest was "What I Would Do for God if I Had a Religious Vocation."

Awards will consist of a weeks' stay at Camp Lawrence, near Valparaiso, the Diocese of Gary recreation spot for youth.

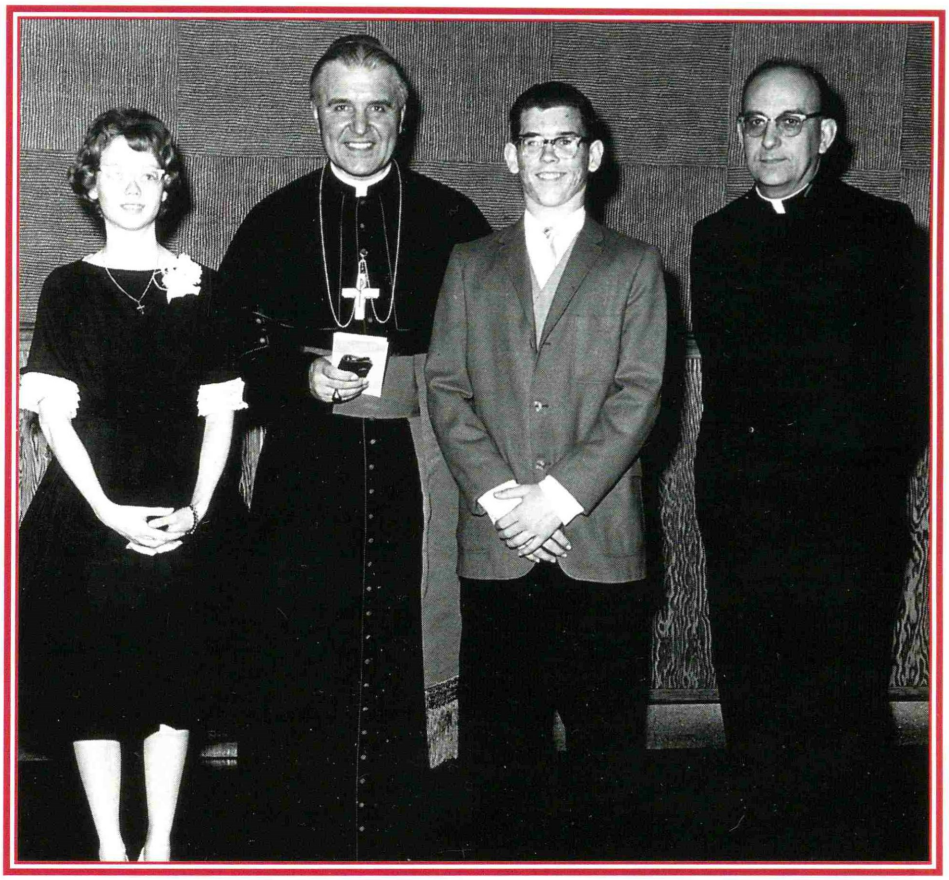
Approximately 500 eighth and seventh grade students in 30 parochial schools participated in the contest. Ted Kmak was general chairman in charge.

• • •

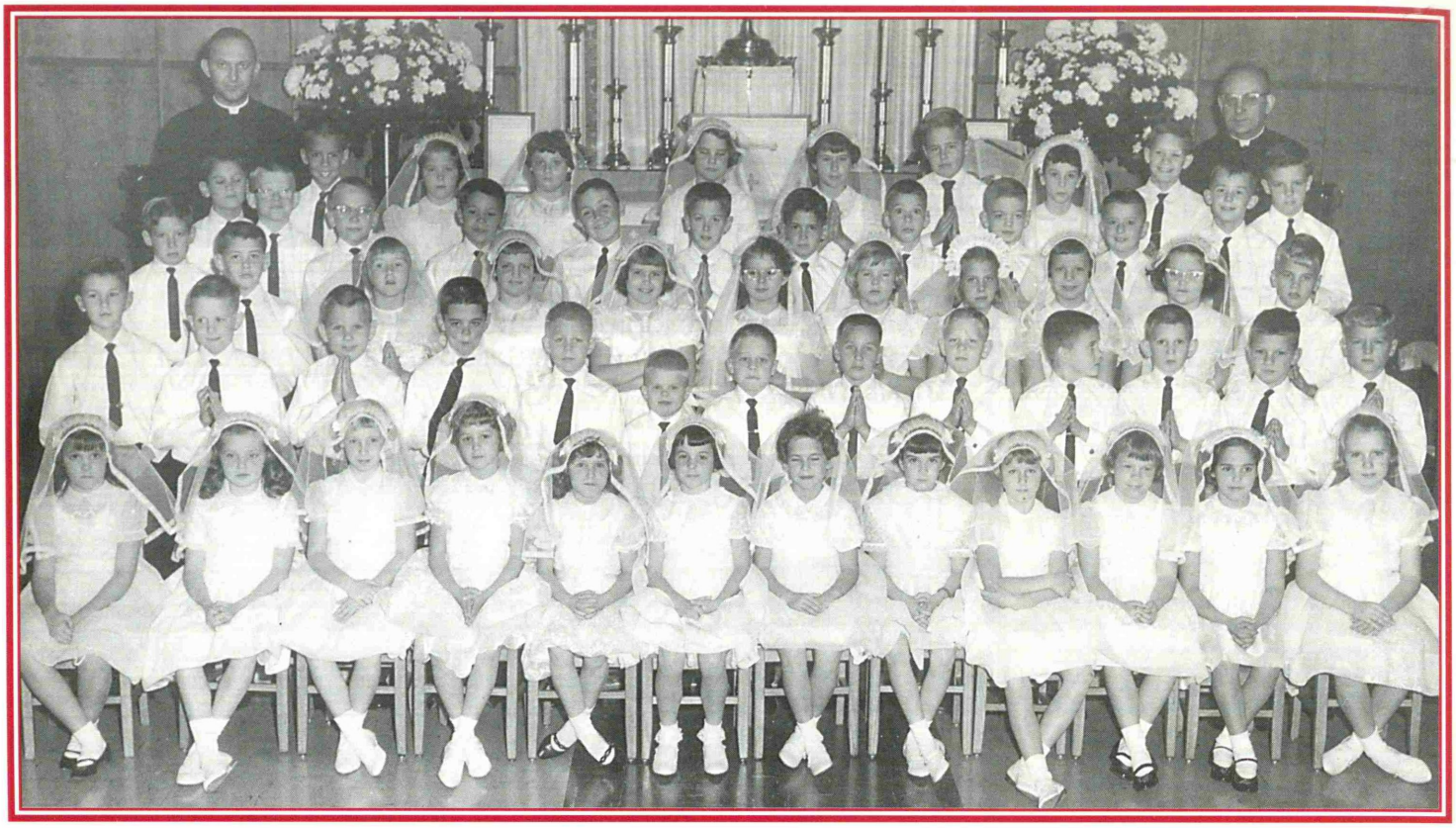
FRANK DEMPS of Whiting, president of the Serra Club, will open the after-dinner program and introduce Dr. Joseph Murphy of Lansing, program chairman and president-elect. Dr. Murphy will introduce the essay winners. After the winners read their essays, Bishop Grutka will present the awards, and will address the gathering of Serrans, their wives and clergy.

Also a part of the evening's program will be public recognition of the work of Msgr. Alfred W. Reinig, former pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Hammond, as chaplain of the Serra Club. Because of his recent transfer to Michigan City he will relinquish his duties as chaplain.

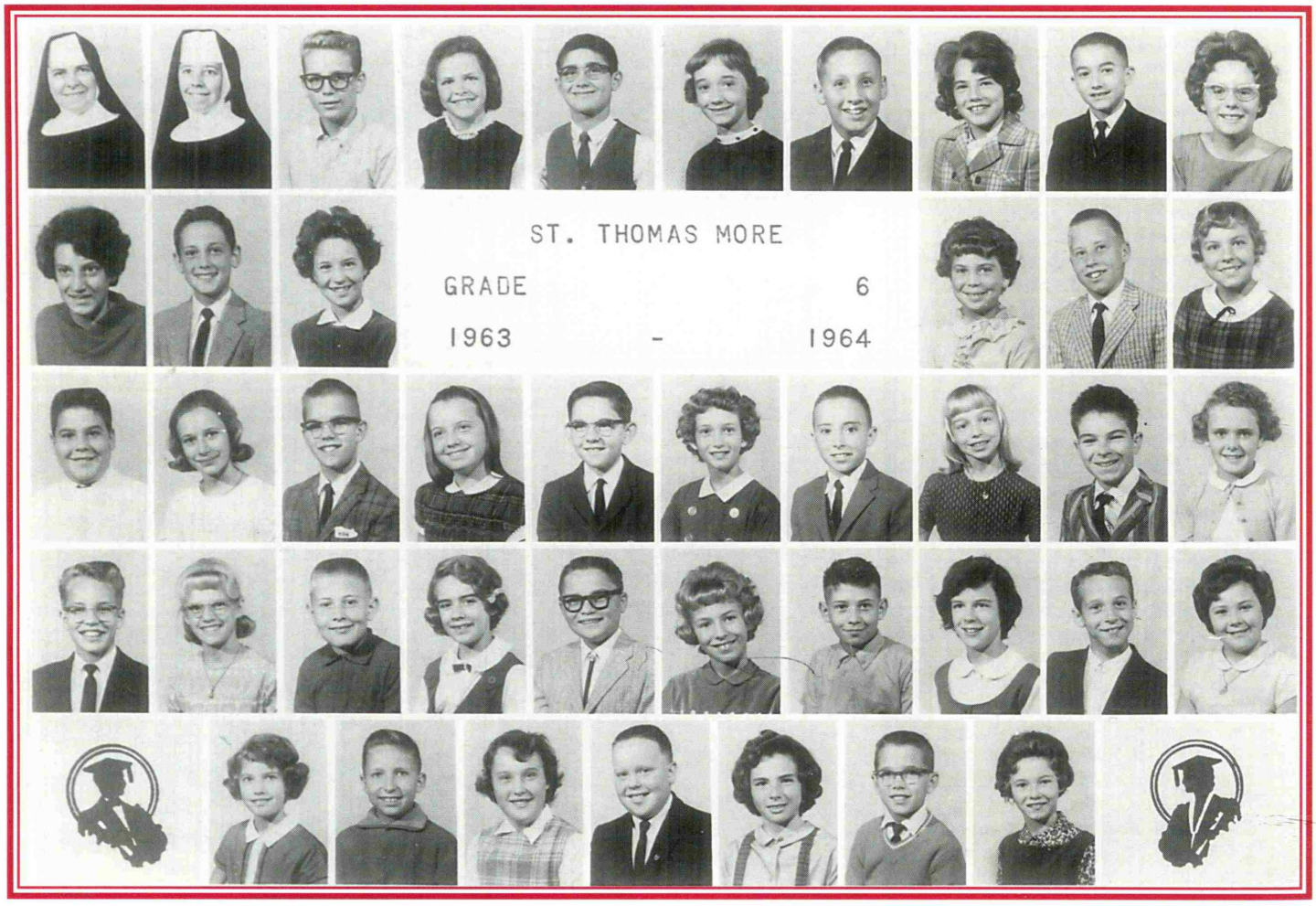
John Canning and Susan Hutchens were winners of the 1962 Essay Contest sponsored by the Serra Club. Theme was "What I Would Do For God If I Had A Religious Vocation." Bishop Grutka presented the awards. Susan Hutchens is now Sister Susan O.S.B. at Nauvoo.



Sister Andrea answers Leslie's question.



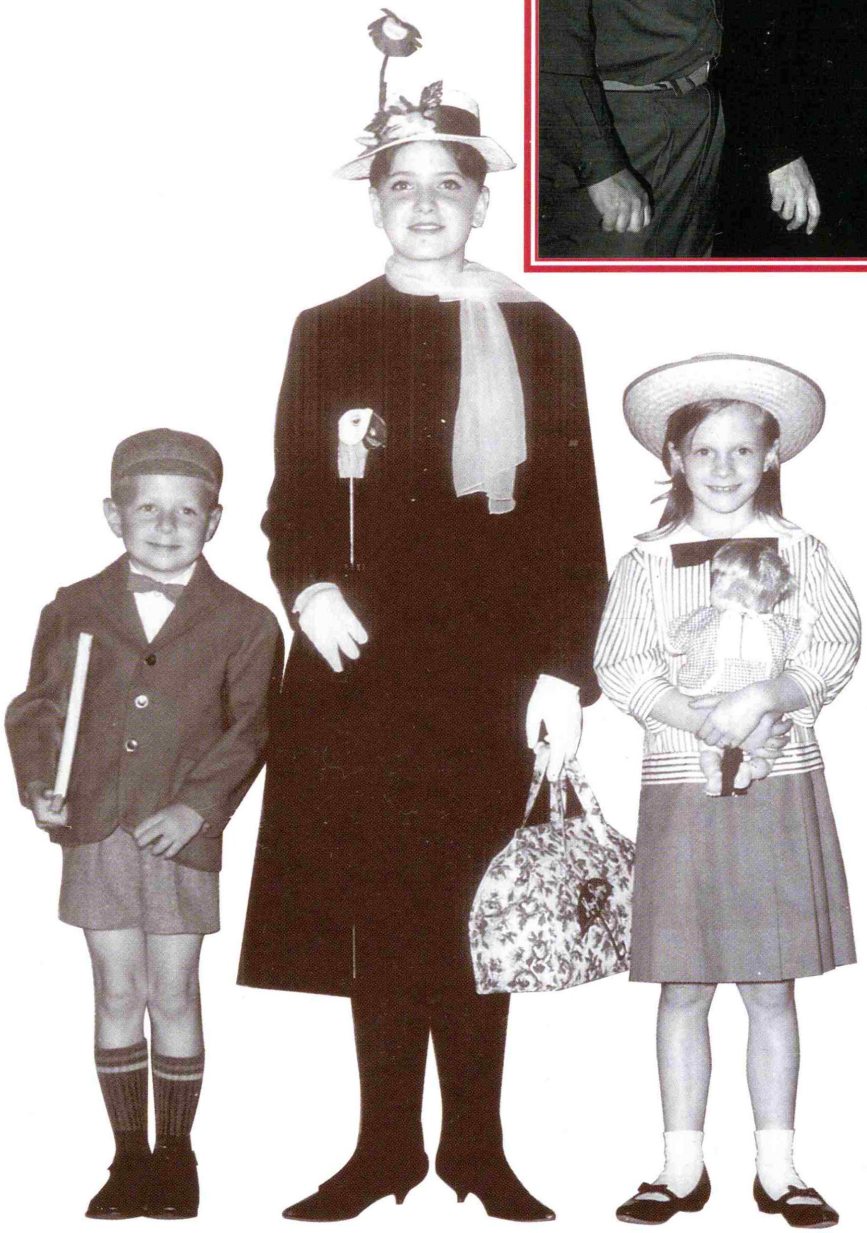
First Holy Communion - 1964



Grade 6 with Sister Jane, Principal and Sister Virginia.

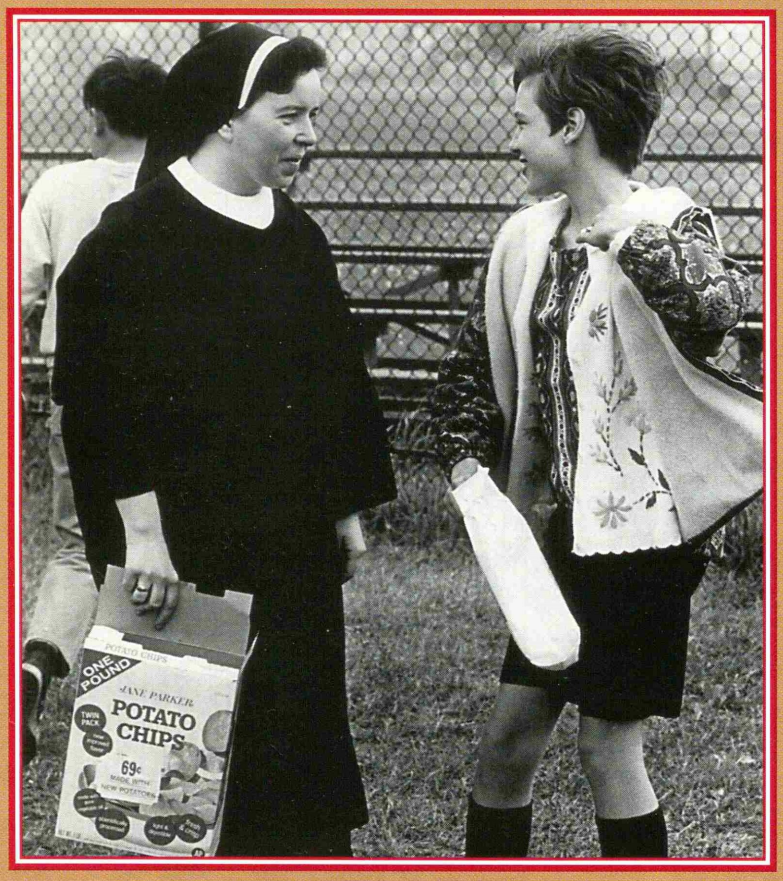
1964-1965

1965 Cub Scout Leaders John Holloron, Dr. Smitley, Tom Pope, Fr. Weis and Vernon Miller.

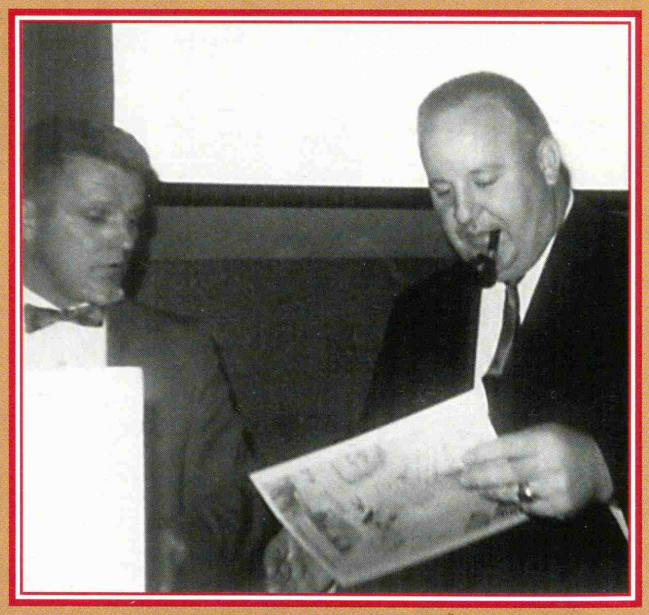


Music students and School Band present "Mary Poppins". Martin Sidor as Michael Banks, Alicia Purcell as Mary Poppins, and JoAnn Wleklinski as Jane Banks.

The Adult Choir at Wednesday practice.

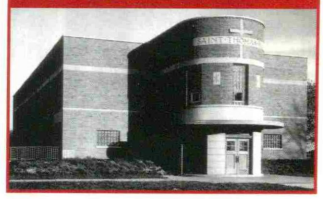


Sister Katherine brings potato chips to the ball park.

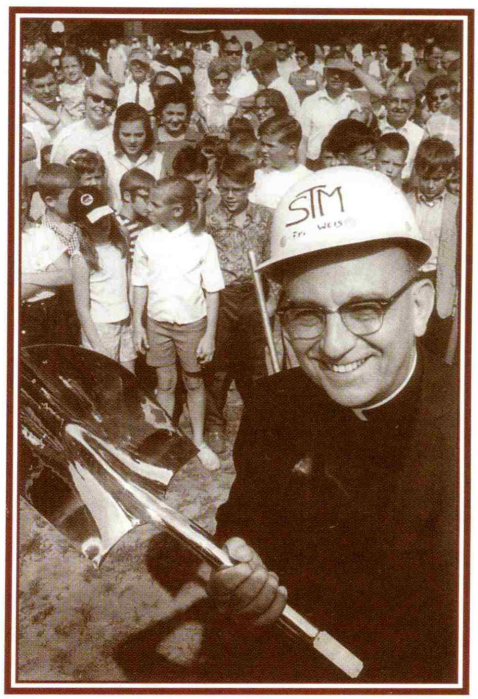


George Porter - teacher

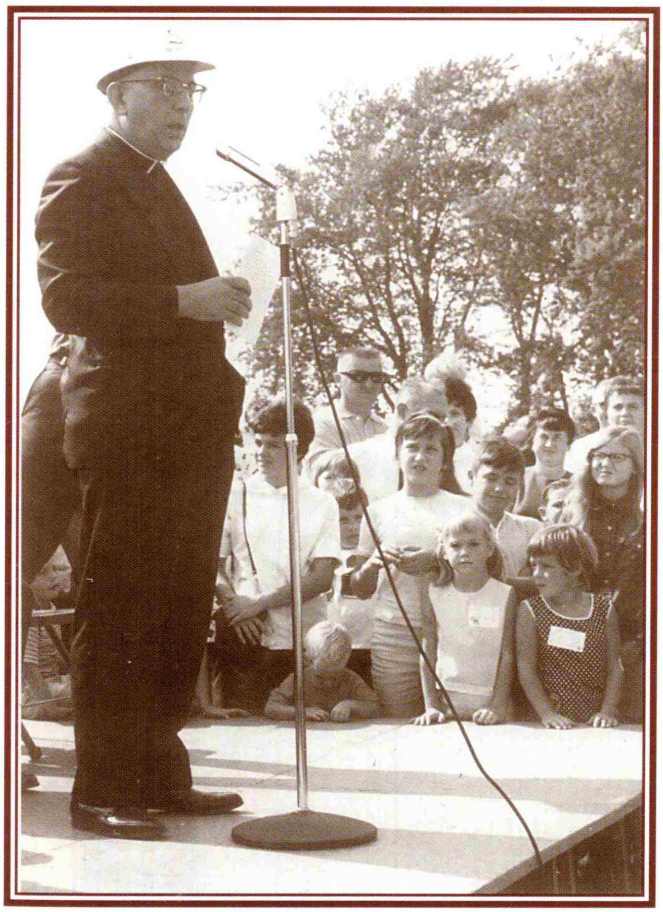
1967-1968



Groundbreaking for our third and present church.
Tim Galvin, Jr., Fr. Weis and Jim Turner - Architect.



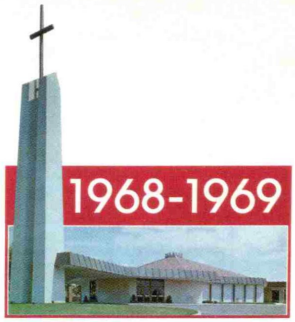
Fr. Weis with his silver shovel.



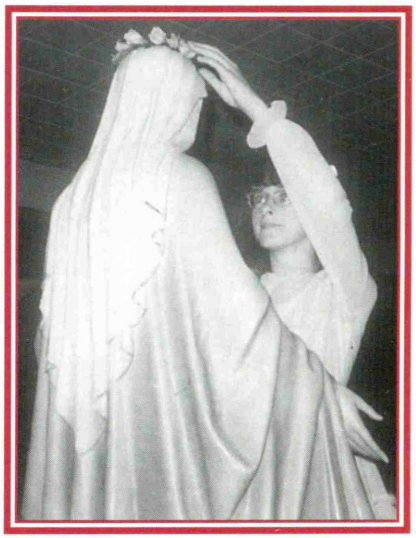
Fr. Weis saying a "few words."

Bishop Grutka with the Girl Scouts at
the Marian Awards.

Fr. George Glueckert's First Mass. Graduate of St. Thomas More School and Mt. Carmel High School. Member of Carmelite Order.



Basketball Team Championship. Dr. Richard Duhon and Joseph Sobek, Coaches.



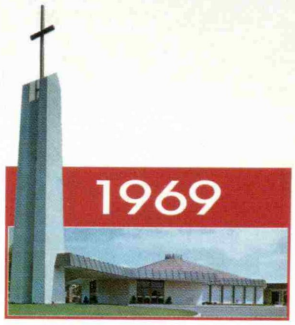
May Crowning in 1969, by Susan Resler.

Something to remember St. Thomas More by, a large heart autographed by over 400 school children and their parents, presented by twins Donna and Diane Barker. Seated from left, the Rev. Robert Weis, pastor, Mrs. and Mrs. Anthony Anzur, and Sister Joan Cook, school principal. (JOURNAL Photo by Ken Baker)

St. Thomas Honors Anzur

Vi Anzur retired in 1969, after 17 years as Cafeteria Manager.

The marble altar and sanctuary.



The New Church - seen from the main entrance.

The Nave seats over 1,200 people.

DEDICATION DAY
MAY 3, 1970

PONTIFICAL MASS AND JOYFUL CELEBRATION

Jean Sidor, Father Weis and William Blake.

"Like the Biblical Mustard Seed..."

Like the biblical mustard seed which grew into a large tree, so is the growth of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Munster, Indiana.

In the summer of 1945 Bishop John F. Noll, bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne, designated Father Robert Weis, then assistant at St. Mary's Church, Griffith, to take a survey of all the Catholics living within the town limits of Munster. The survey was taken rapidly and it was soon found that about 100 Catholic families living in Munster were very desirous of having their own parish. Steps were taken immediately and a small parcel of land on Calumet Ave. just south of Ridge Road was purchased. Munster was quite a small town and there was no building in Munster large enough to have Holy Mass for people on Sundays.

This meant that another quick move had to be made. On the Monday after Thanksgiving 1945 actual construction began for a small frame building to be used as a Church. Almost the entire construction was completed by members of the newly found parish to be known as St. Thomas More Church. Through the cold Winter work was continued with great zeal so that the first Mass in the new church was said on Sunday, February 24, 1946. This tiny church could accommodate around one hundred people. Two masses were held each Sunday but by September that same year five Masses were necessary each Sunday. Assistance was obtained from the Precious Blood Fathers of St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer. These priests have been asssiting on Sundays throughout the years except for a brief interval.

From the beginning interest was shown in the children. The Sisters of St. Francis, from St. Mary's School, Griffith, were very generous in their time and efforts to assist Father Weis in the religious instruction of Children. Seven children comprised the First Communion Class, June 16, 1946.

It was only a matter of two years until it was seen that a larger church would be necessary and that a parish school should be started. Plans were made and on April 19, 1948 ground was broken for the construction of a new church to seat 450 persons and a school of six classrooms. In June 1948 Monsignor Edward Mungovan, Vicar General of the Diocese of Fort Wayne, officiated at the cornerstone laying of the new church and school. The first mass in the new church was on Palm Sunday, 1949. In September 1949 St. Thomas More School was opened under the direction of the Sisters of St. Benedict, Nauvoo, Illinois. Three classes were used with six grades and 98 children.

(to be continued in the Nov. 7 Sun)

Church members reflect over St. Thomas More's 25 years of growth as they read in the new church building. Pictured are Mrs. Edward Sidor, Father Weis, and W. A. Blake. (SUN Photo)

St. Thomas More Looks Back On 25 Years of Growth

(CONTINUED FROM OCT. 31)

1949 was an important and eventful year in the history of this young parish. It was climaxed by a visit from His Excellency Bishop John F. Noll, D.D. who dedicated and blessed the new church and school.

From the very begining of the parish organizations became very active. The Holy Name Society, The Ladies Altar and Rosary Society, the Catholic Youth Organization, parish choir, were a vital part of the Parish. All the people of the parish including the newcomers, joined to promote a spiritual atmosphere as well as to care for the material needs of the parish. The "old church and the Rectory were the only meeting places for the groups.

The rapid growth in just a few more years caused a necessity for further building. This construction included eight more classrooms, a large gymnasium and play hall, a cafeteria, an activities room, a music room and new school offices. This portion of the building was completed late in 1956. This enabled the parish to have a much increased social life - basketball and roller skating for the children, dances and dinners and parties for the adults, and more important, more school facilities.

The increased facilities seemed to being about even greater growth of the parish. From the one hundred families in 1945 the parish list now included 575 families. The increase is numbers the next several years brought about an increase of Sunday Masses so that soon the Gymnasium had to be used on Sundays for additional Masses, at times ten masses being needed. By 1961 another addition had increased the size of the school to 18 classrooms.

When the school building was completed in 1949, four Sisters of St. Benedict came to our parish. The Sisters were housed in the space of two classrooms until 1955 when a large house on Jackson Street was purchased and renovated. Yet even this was outgrown by the number of Sisters so that in a few years a large addition was added to the Convent.

From the time that the large portion of the parish complex was completed in 1956 it was obvious that in not too many years a larger church would have to be built. The newly constructed building meant that a debt of the parish would have to be liquidated before a church could be erected. This was a matter of a few years when the debt was paid off and then began the saving towards the new church.

The response of the members of the parish for funds to erect a new church was overwhelming. In 1965 a building fund was started. In 1967 the services of an Architect were obtained. A great deal of time, study and traveling was done by Father Weis, Mr. James Turner, also Mr. William Dahlkamp, Mr. James R. Morrison, Dr. M. A. Tilka, Jr. Mr. Eugene Notalli, Mr. Roy Clark, and Mr. Chester Wleklinski. The plans were finished in 1968.

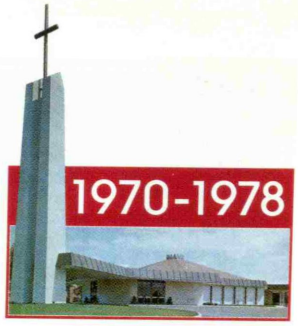
So it was in September 1968, at the Annual Parish Picnic, ground was broken for the new St. Thomas More Church. One year later at the Parish picnic the cornerstone was laid. On May 3rd, 1970 Bishop Andrew G. Grutka, D.D. gathered with the parish and visiting clergy and friends to dedicate and bless the beautiful new structure which has a capacity of seating 1200 persons.

At present St. Thomas More has around 1500 families. Father Robert B. Weis is Pastor. Father Joseph J. Mosko is Associate Pastor. The School enrollment is 628 pupils. The teaching staff is made up of 11 Sisters of St. Benedict, and 15 lay teachers. The parish has grown so rapidly that our school has not been able to accommodate all the Catholic children. Sisters and lay teachers have been teaching classes of religion on Saturdays and some evenings. Present C C D program of team teaching involves ninetyteachers with a grade school enrollment of 672. High School classes meet in the homes of twenty moderator couples.

The Ladies Altar and Rosary Society is the most active group in the Parish under the presidency of Mrs. Jeanne Sidor. The Adult mixed choir is under the direction of Miss Betty Clayton. A Catholic Young Peoples group is being reactivated under the direction of Father Mosko.

Throughout the years the people of St. Thomas More Parish have cooperated to bring about this large parish and indicated their willingness to put forth even more effort to bring about a more complete community within the parish family so that the primary purposed of the church may be fulfilled.

Girl Scout Marian Awards - Bishop Grutka.



Northwest Indiana July 19, 1992

Sister living words of her 1962 essay

by Elizabeth Johnson

When she won the Serra Club of the Calumet Region's vocation essay contest in 1962, Susan Hutchens and John Canning were congratulated by Father Robert Weis, pastor of St. Thomas More, Munster, and by Bishop Andrew G. Grutka.

Thirty years ago, 13-year-old Susan Hutchens of Munster won an essay contest sponsored by the Serra Club of the Calumet Region, with a composition titled, "What I Would Do For God If I Had A Religious Vocation."

Today, Sister Susan Hutchens is the treasurer for the Benedictine Sisters community based at St. Mary's Priory in Navoo, Ill. Members of this community teach at St. Thomas More School in Munster, from which Hutchens graduated in 1962.

Hutchens, daughter of Dorothy and the late Glen Hutchens of Munster, said that she had not seen the prize-winning essay since she wrote it in Sister Celestine's English or religion class in eighth grade.

"I'm sure I wrote something about service," she said. "I know I liked both mathematics and music; maybe I said something about music."

Hutchens said that she had considered a religious vocation while in grade school, but abandoned the idea by the time she graduated from Bishop Noll Institute.

"I decided I wanted to go to college and study mathematics, so I gave up the idea," she recalled. After graduating from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in Terre Haute, she returned to St. Thomas More School, where she taught for four years.

"The idea of vocation kept coming back," she commented. "In my fourth year of teaching, I moved in with the sisters and joined the order." She entered the Order of St. Benedict on December 30, 1973.

After becoming a sister, Hutchens continued teaching. She taught math and religion for seven years at St. Mary Academy High School in Navoo, and also earned a master's degree in theology at St. John's University in Minnesota. She then taught for five years and was in administration at Bergen High School in Peoria, Ill. During that time, she also began taking graduate courses in administration at the University of Notre Dame.

For the past four years, Hutchens has served as the treasurer of her community.

When Hutchens won the Serra Club essay contest 30 years ago, she was among 500 seventh and eighth graders from 30 parochial schools who participated in the contest. This year, the Serra Club of the Calumet Area revived the contest after a number of years, but held it only at one parochial school — St. Thomas More in Munster.

According to Serran Jerry Barbar, approximately 15 students entered this year's contest. He said that the club will evaluate the contest in the fall, and decide whether to expand it to other schools.

"We hadn't held the contest in a while because of lack of interest on the part of club members," he explained. "We think the contest definitely has value, but as with any project, you have to have the people interested in making it happen."

Hutchens speculated that an essay contest such as the one sponsored by the Serrans might not get as many entries as a similar contest 30 years ago, because "it's probably optional now."

"Thirty years ago, Sister said, 'This is what we will do for our assignment,' and we did it," she said. "It did make me think, though, and since I was considering a vocation at the time, I guess I had something to say."

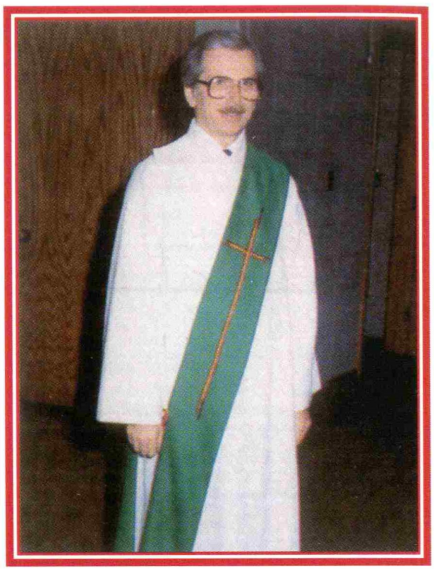
Sister Susan Hutchens O.S.B. won a 1962 Essay Contest titled "What I Would Do For God If I Had A Religious Vocation." She is now Treasurer for the Benedictine Sisters of St. Mary's Monastery in Nauvoo.

Sister Susan Hutchens on August 1, 1978, made Perpetual Profession as a Sister of St. Benedict.

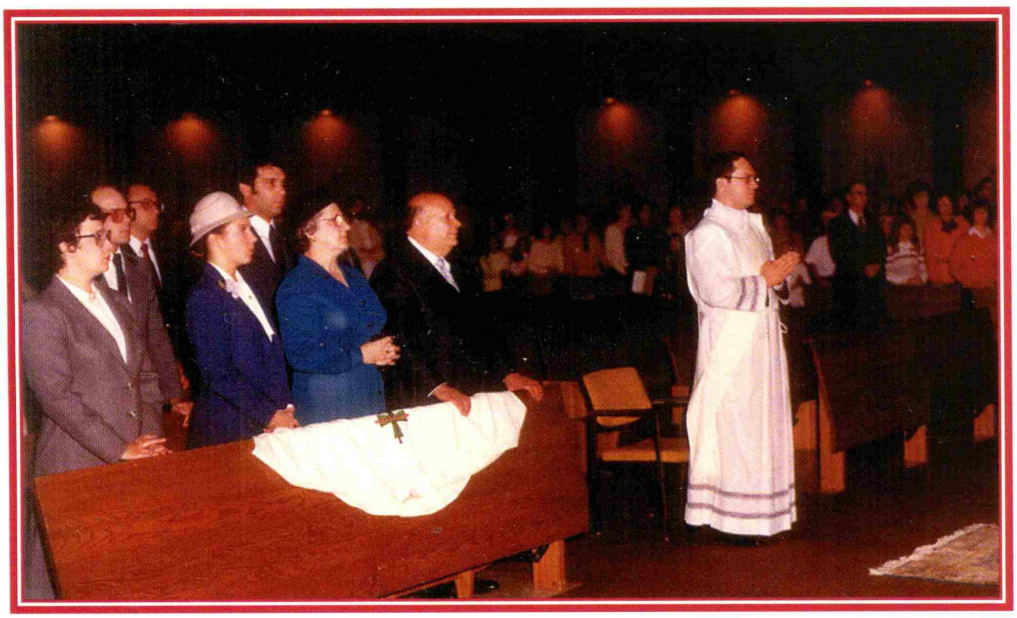
With Prioress, Sister Teresa Ann Harrington (left) and Sister Sheila McGrath (right).

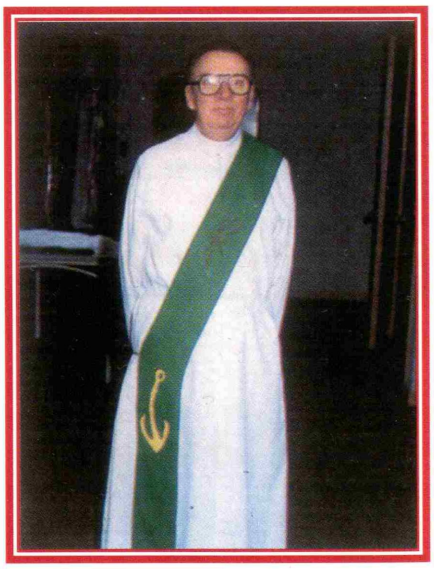
Sister Susan Hutchens (center) August 1 made her perpetual profession as a Benedictine Sister. She is pictured with Prioress Sister Teresa Ann Harrington (left) and Formation Directress Sister Sheila McGrath (right).

Fr. Mark Mazza, graduate of our school, studied for the Priesthood in Rome. He was ordained in our church on October 2, 1980. His First Mass was here on October 5, 1980. He is a Priest of the Gary Diocese.



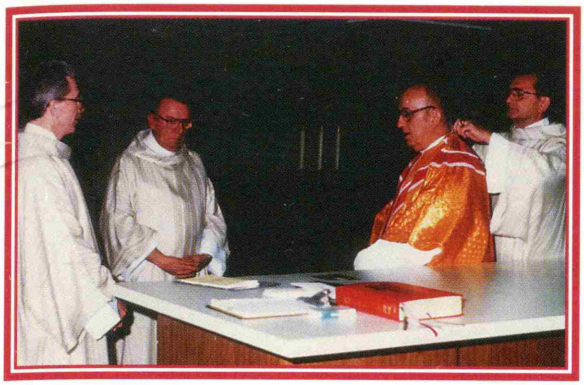
Robert L. O'Donnell ordained Permanent Deacon February 22, 1981.





David R. Brown ordained Permanent Deacon February 22, 1981.

7th & 8th grade Girls Choir with Terry Clark - Director.

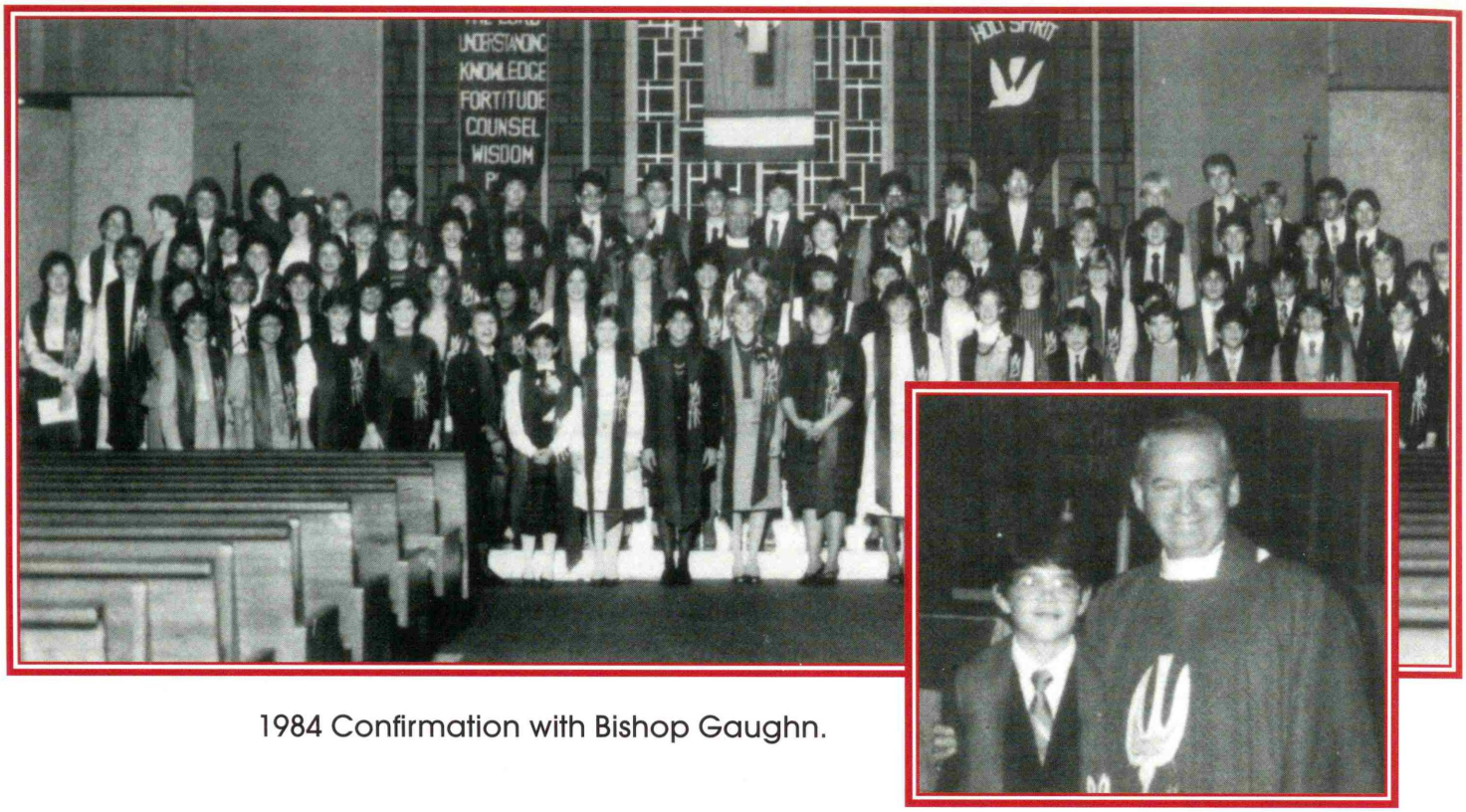


Fr. Weis with
three Deacons.

April, 1982, Confirmation with Bishop Grutka.

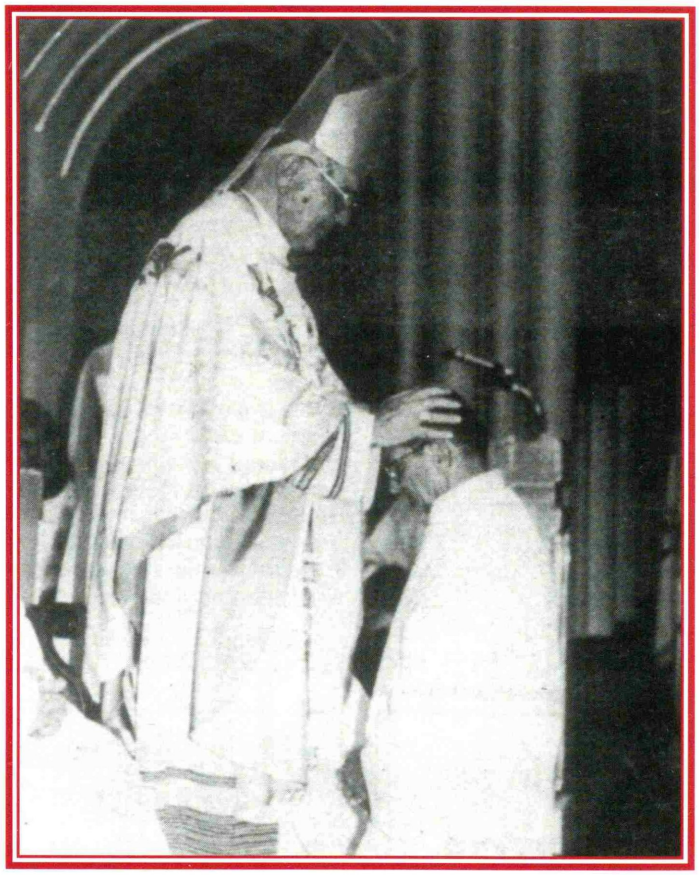
8th grade girls undefeated basketball team.

7th grade girls undefeated basketball team.

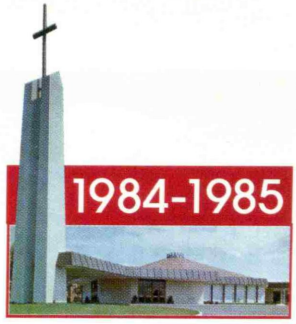


1984 Confirmation with Bishop Gaughn.

Fr. Weis with Deacon Sobek.



Bishop Grutka lays hands on Joseph Sobek ordaining him Permanent Deacon June 17, 1984.



You are cordially invited to join in honoring Rev. Msgr. Robert B. Weis upon his retirement on June 2, 1985.

After each Mass on this day an informal reception will be held in the gym where cake and coffee will be served.

A Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at 12:30 p.m. with Bishops Norbert F. Gaughan and Andrew G. Grutka in attendance.

A reception and presentation wil
the school gym.

Please plan to attend and sho
preciation of Monsignor Weis for
of faithful, devoted and dedicated se
and to the Church.

June, 1985

Dear Friends, Parishioners, Benefactors:

I never realized how hard it would be to retire from a parish in which I have served for forty years. I promise I will never do it again.

It is particularly difficult when people like you have expressed your appreciation through your kindnesses, gifts, beautiful words and sincere thanks. I do feel so happy that I have been able to serve you. In fact, I feel guilty now that I am running away from a task.

But, you can be sure that I will be mindful in my daily prayers and in whatever help I can give to the people of St. Thomas More Parish

This note to all of you is just a small way of expressing my VERY SINCERE THANKS to God and to all of you.

Yours sincerely,

Msgr. Weis

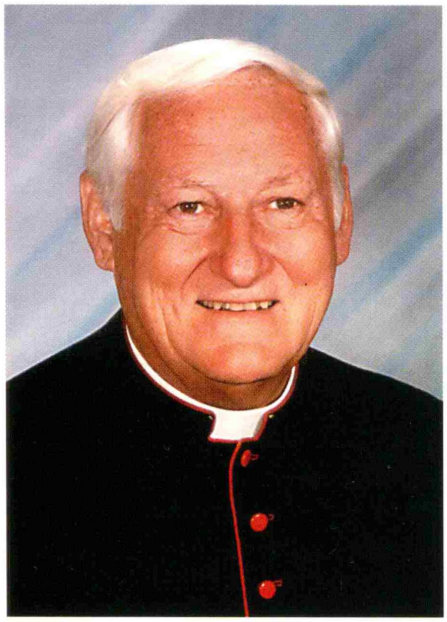
Monsignor Robert B.Weis

P.S. After a week of retirement, my golf clubs are still rusty.

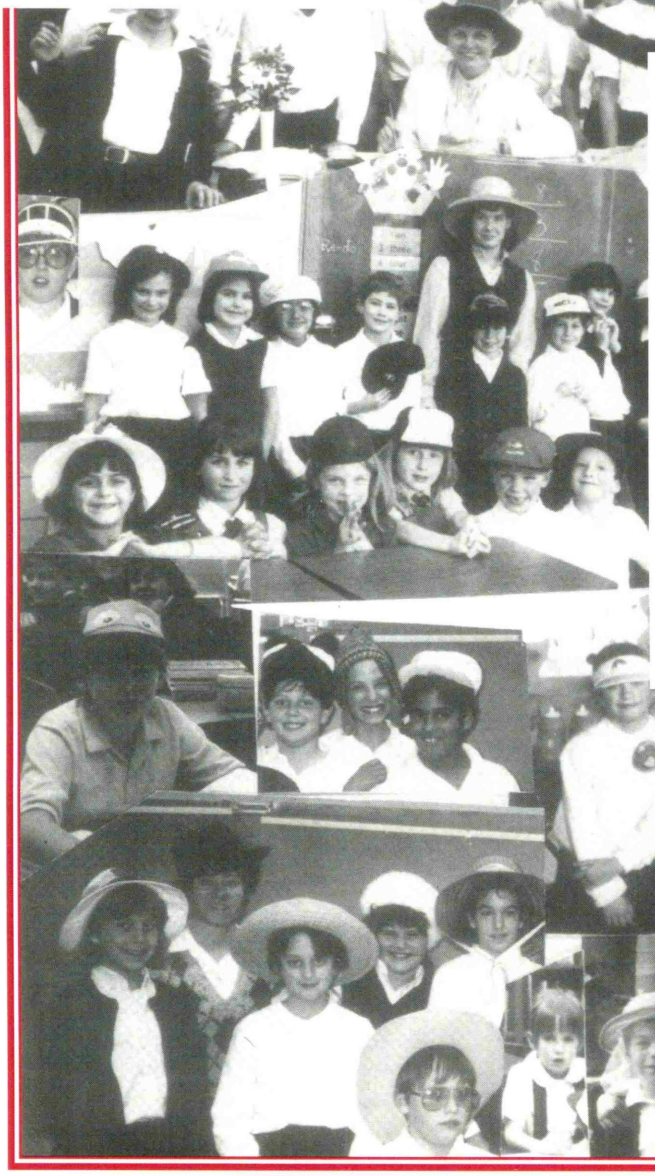
REMEMBRANCE of the
RETIREMENT OF OUR
BELOVED FOUNDING PASTOR

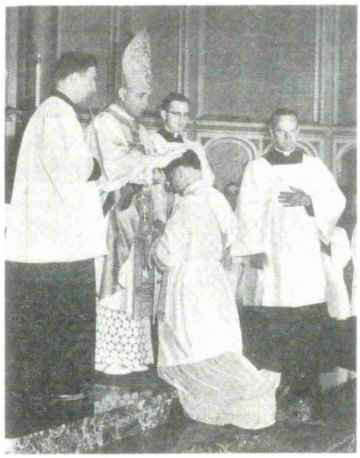
REV. MSGR.
ROBERT BERNARD WEIS
Saint Thomas More Parish
Munster, Indiana
FEBRUARY, 1945 - JUNE, 1985
Ad Multos Annos!
Pray for me as I will for thee, that we may merrily meet in heaven. St. Thomas More.

ELEVATION series



Msgr. Carl F. Mengeling appointed Second Pastor - June 13, 1985.

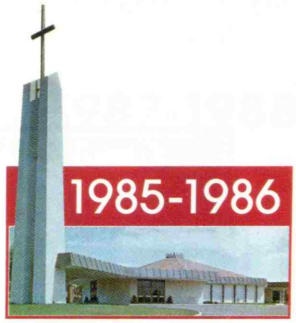




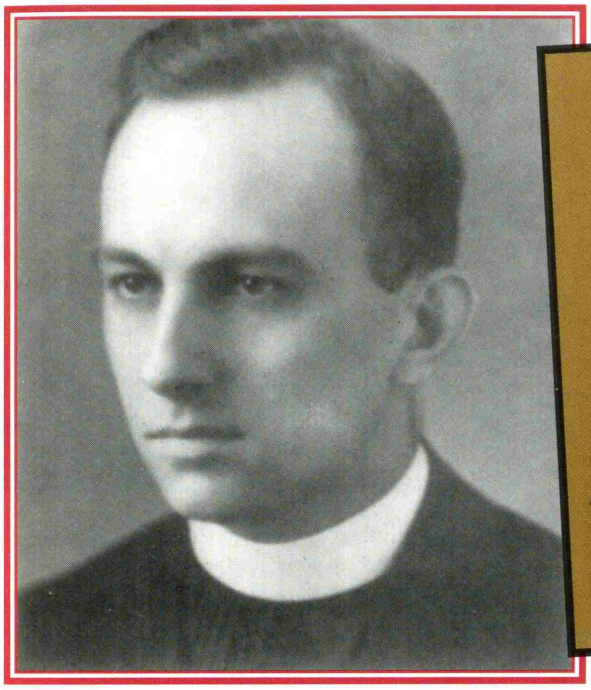
Rev. Robert L. Charlebois, M.S.W. has the distinction of being the first diocesan priest ordained for the service of the Diocese of Gary by Bishop Andrew G. Grutka—May 25, 1957. Father Charlebois is presently serving with the N.C.W.C. Relief Services in Ecuador.

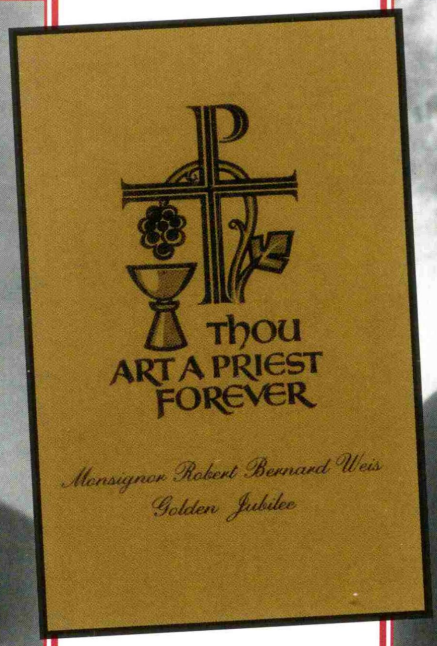
First priests to be ordained by Bishop Andrew G. Grutka, May 25, 1957 were (left to right) Revs. Robert L. Charlebois, Lawrence M. Herg, Carl F. Mengeling and Aloysius J. Nondorf.

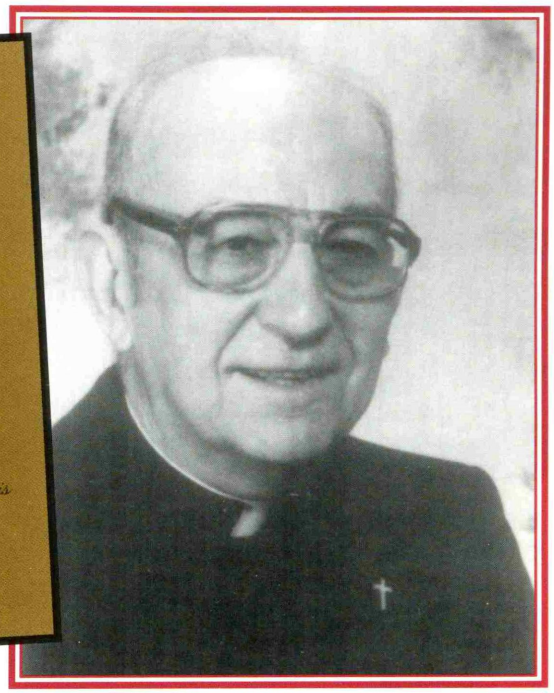
First Priests ordained by Bishop Grutka include: Carl F. Mengeling - May 25, 1957.



Msgr. Weis's Golden Jubilee as a Priest. Ordained on June 6, 1936, by Bishop Noll in the Cathedral, Fort Wayne.



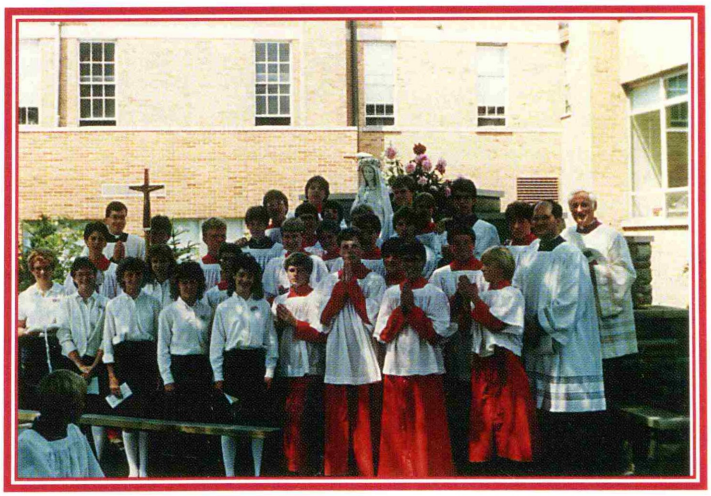




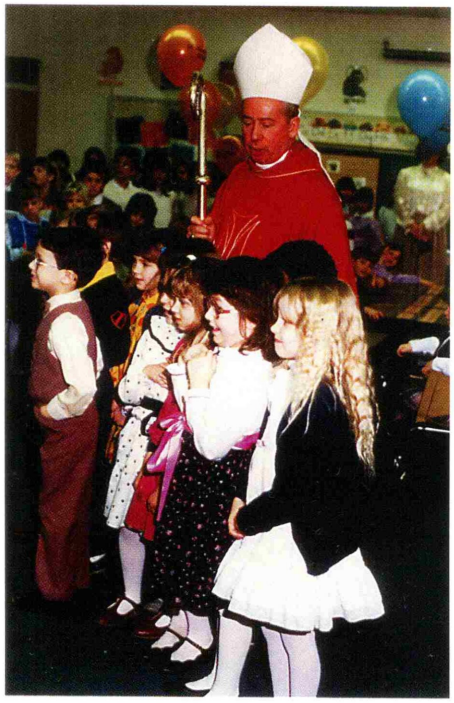
1936

1986

Msgr. Mengeling with graduates



Grotto scene with Msgr. Mengeling, Fr. Mazza and Fr. Halfacre.



Bishop Gaughn at dedication of the kindergarten.

Sister Norma Reiplinger's Silver Anniversary of Religious Profession at St. Mary Monastery.
Norma came to St. Thomas More School in 1949.
She attended St. Mary Academy in Nauvoo and joined the Sisters of St. Benedict.

Ms. Gregory's
kindergarten class

1987-1988

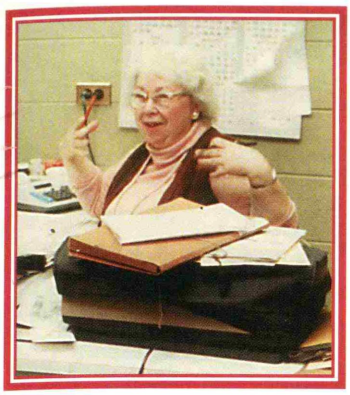
Rhonda and Joe Haddad wedding.

Forty Hours - 1989

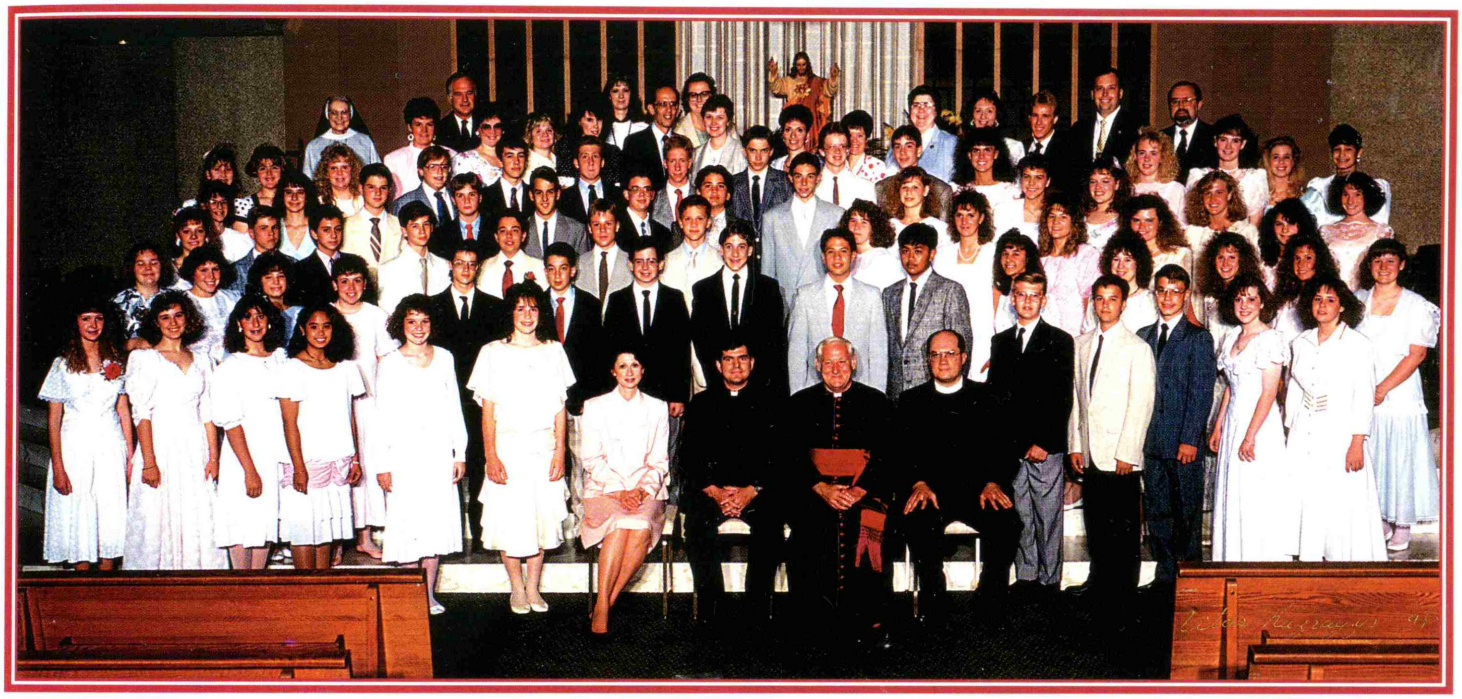
Science Fair Time

CCD Christmas Pageant

Christmas - 1989



Charlotte Siegler in the Parish office.



Graduation - 1989

First Communion - 1989

80 - 40 - 40 - 20 CELEBRATION

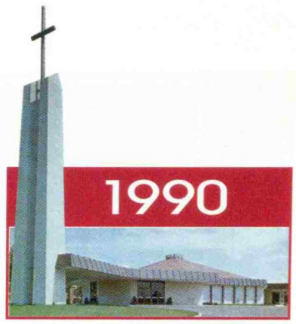
80th Birthday of Msgr. Weis

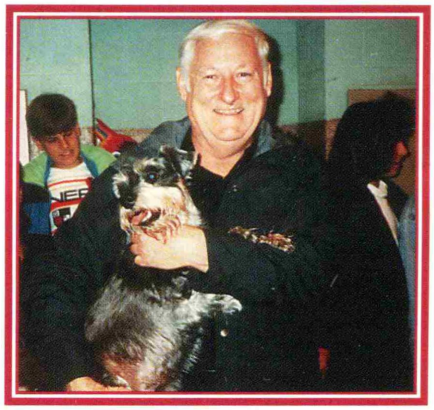
40th Anniversary of St. Thomas More School

40th Anniversary of The Sisters of St. Benedict

20th Anniversary of the Dedication of the New Church

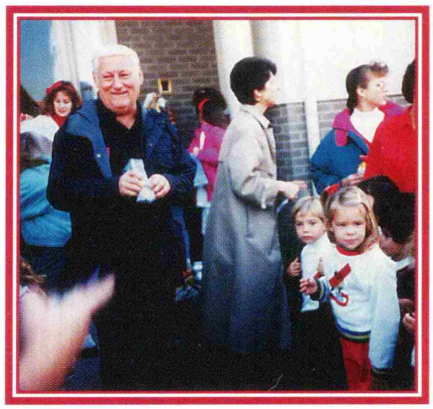
Saints and other holy persons at the school





Msgr. Mengeling's 60th birthday with the school children.

First Communion-May, 1990



THE TIMES

Religion

Saturday, April 28, 1990 A-8

St. Thomas More Church to celebrate 45 years

By NANCY NAU SULLIVAN
Times Correspondent

MUNSTER – The Rev. Robert Weis remembers the meager beginning of St. Thomas More Catholic Church.

It was more than 45 years ago.

He was working among the Catholics of Griffith.

He also was administering to less than 100 Catholic families in Munster, a sparsely populated Dutch community in the wetlands of the south region.

"We couldn't find a place to say Mass," he said.

It was not permitted in the public buildings, and not much else was built yet.

So that small bunch of Catholics raised $3,000 and built a "shack of a church," Weis said, and they were proud of it.

That held them until 1949, when they built the distinct rounded building that faces Calumet Avenue.

"Growth was outstanding, a miraculous growth," said Weis, who retired in 1985 after 40 years as pastor. "And everything has worked out."

The growth was unusual because Munster was mostly Protestant at the time, he said. Today, the church is the largest in the Diocese of Gary, with 2,800 families.

This weekend, members will mark several milestones in their growth with a celebration.

Weis's home parish will honor his 80th birthday, which is May 3.

The church will also mark the 40th year of the estabishment of the school and its affiliation with the Sisters of St. Benedict of Nauvoo, Ill.

It also will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the new church, the parish's third since Weis founded the parish and built the first.

A con-celebrated Mass will be held at 5:30 p.m. today.

It will include the pastor Monsignor Carl F. Mengeling, the Rev. Mark Mazza, the Rev. Michael Maginot and Deacon Joseph Sobek.

A banquet open to 300 parishioners will follow.

St. Thomas More's school, which has an enrollment of 600, kindergarten through eighth grade, will have an open house and tour 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday.

Parishioner and volunteer Gregg Ladd said the weekend is the first major anniversary in 20 years since the last church complex was built.

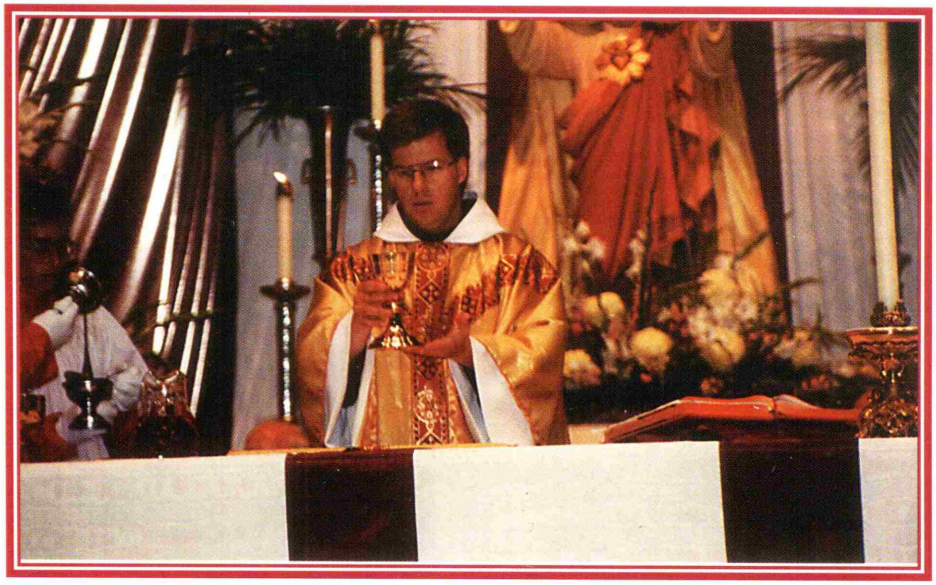
"Because of the parish size, it's very, very active. Something is going on every night," Ladd said said.

"There's no more building going on. We're doing some remodeling.

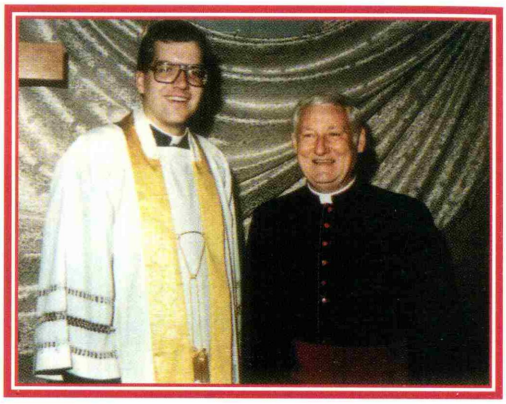
"But now we've reached maximum growth," he said, "and now we're heading toward the 50th anniversary in 1996."

Times photo by John Smierciak
The Rev. Robert Weis talks with 7-year-old Joseph Rogan.

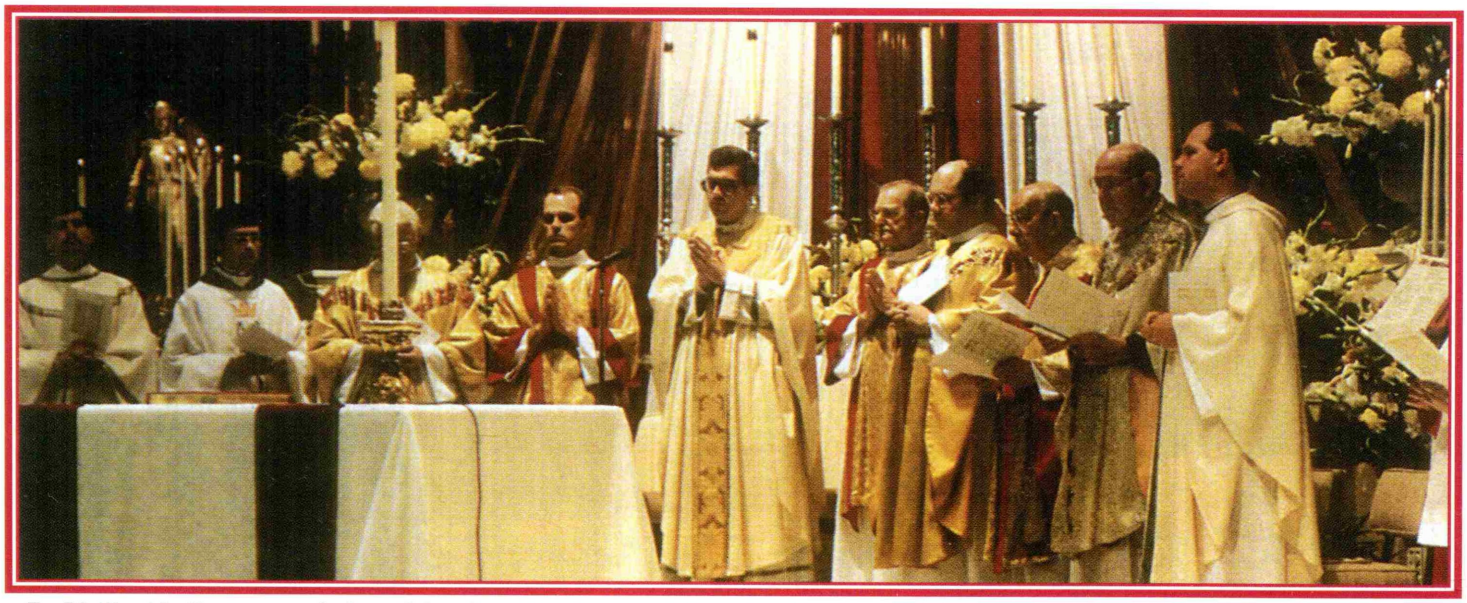
Returning Persian Gulf Veterans.



Fr. Michael Surufka joined the Order of St. Francis. He was ordained a Priest in 1991. His first mass was at St. Thomas More Church on June 9, 1991.

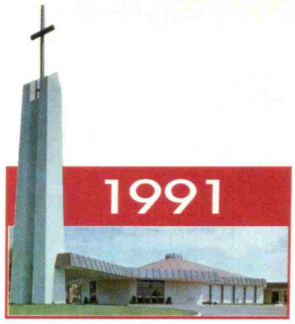


Msgr. with Fr. Halfacre.



Fr. Philip Halfacre ordained for the Diocese of Peoria, IL. His first mass was at St. Thomas More Church on May 26, 1991.

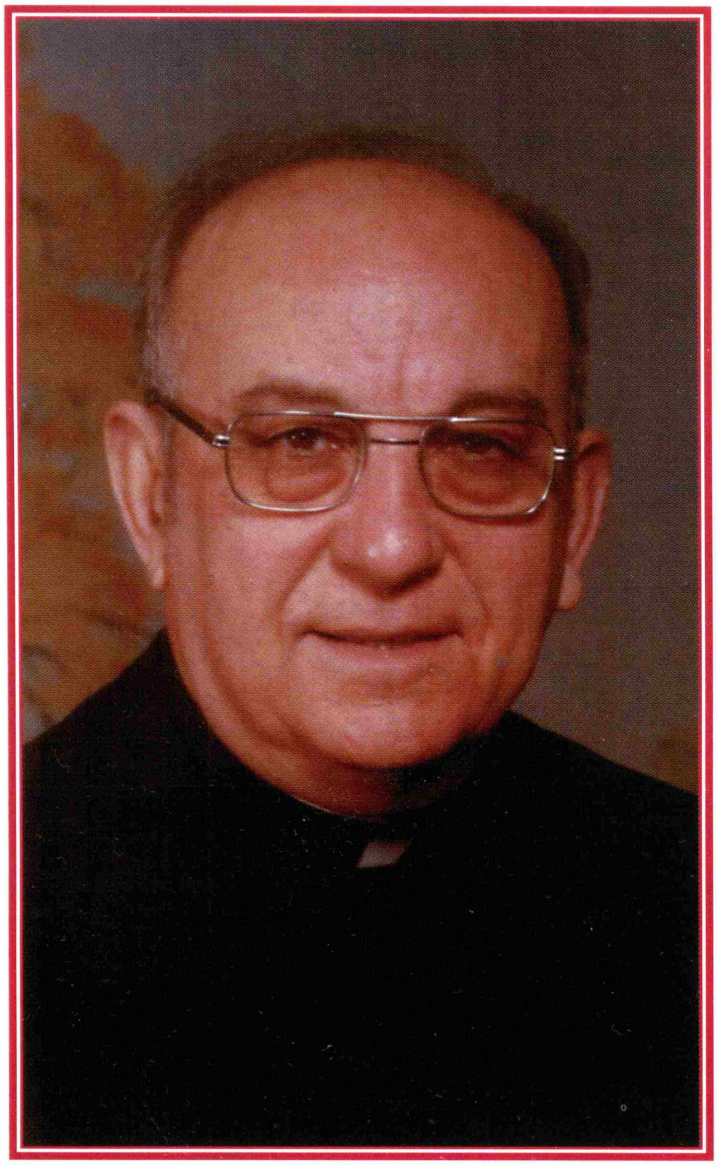
Pat Dublak in the print shop.



First Communion - 1991

First Communion breakfast

In Loving Memory



May 3, 1910
Born in Hammond, Indiana

June 6, 1936
Ordained a priest in the Fort Wayne Cathedral

October 23, 1945
Appointed First Pastor of new Catholic parish in Munster, named St. Thomas More

February 25, 1946
First Mass in temporary wood-frame church

April 10, 1949
First Mass in new permanent church

September 7, 1949
New Catholic School opens

1968-1969
Addition of classrooms, gym, cafeteria, library and offices to the school

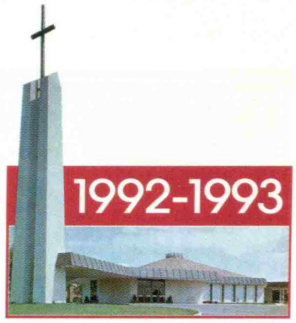
May 3, 1970
Dedication of the present church

April 27, 1984
Pope John Paul II names him a Prelate with the title of "Monsignor"

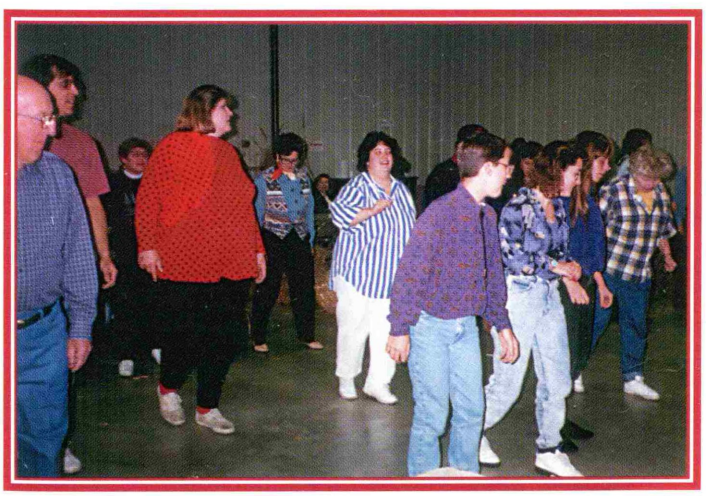
June 2, 1985
Retired from pastorate

June 1, 1986
Golden Jubilee celebration

March 4, 1992
Entered into eternal life

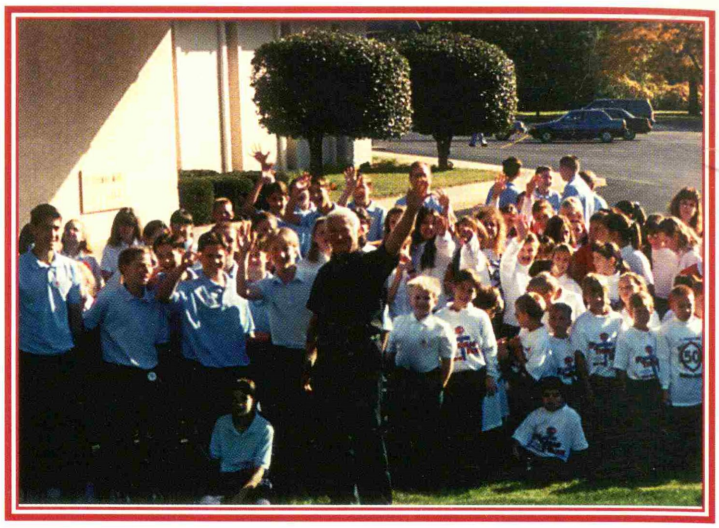


The Bible Study group in the Holy Land with Msgr. Mengeling.

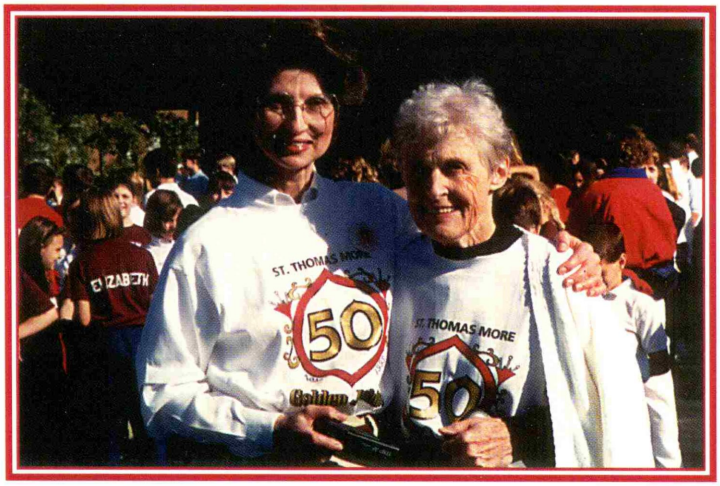


Halloween Barn Raising Hoe Down.

Banner Watchers.

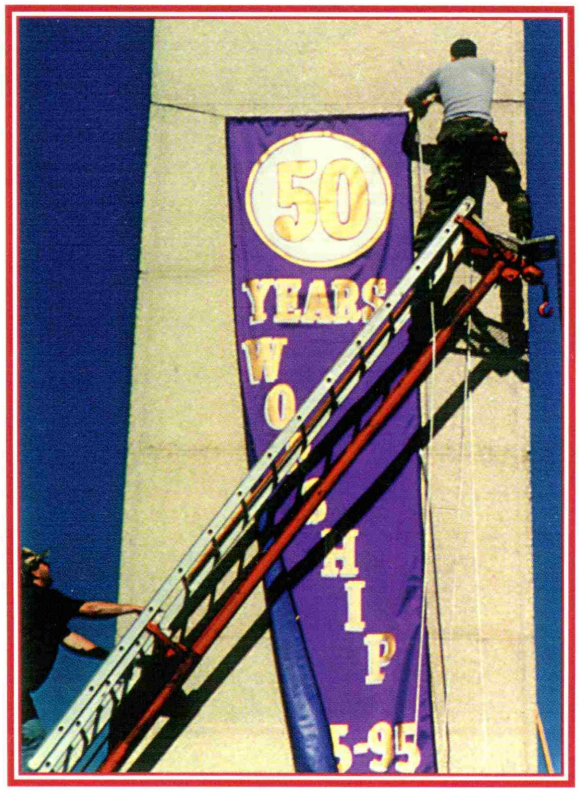


Salute to the Banner.

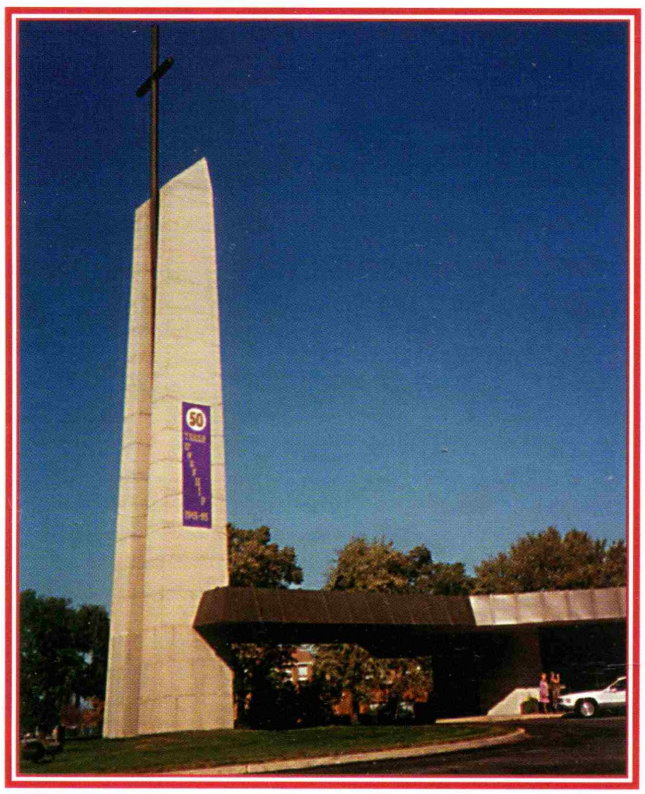


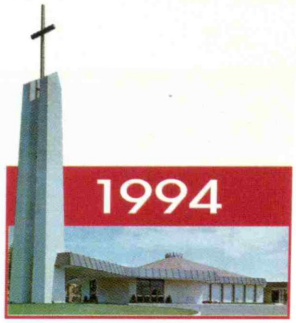
Sister Mary Jean Feeney, First Principal in 1949, and Maureen O'Hern, present Principal.

They thought this was neat!

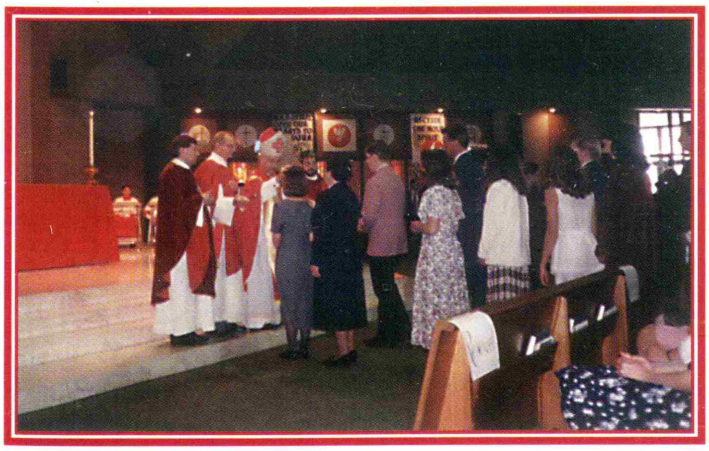


Raising the Banner Day

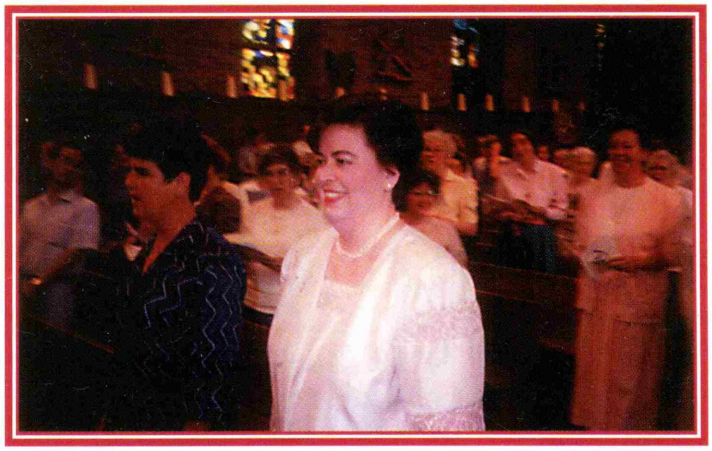




Christmas 1994.



1994 Confirmation with Bishop Melczek.



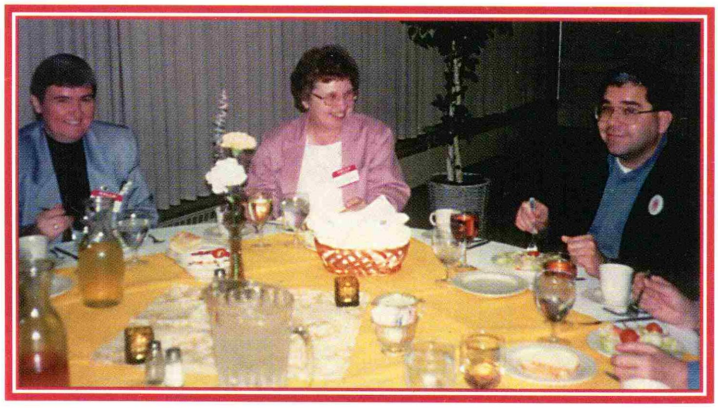
Sister Deborah Wells, a St. Thomas More graduate, professed vows in The Order of the Religious of the Sacred Heart - June, 1994.

Sisters of St. Benedict - former STM teachers.

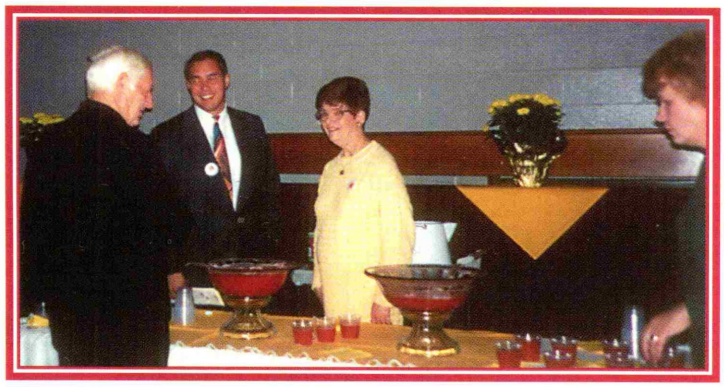
Vi Anzur and Sister Genna.

Senior members.

Former Principals.

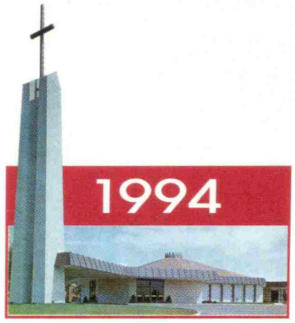


Fr. Angotti with visiting Sisters.



Msgr. Mengeling, Joe Alvarado and Kathy Georgelas at Jubilee Celebration.

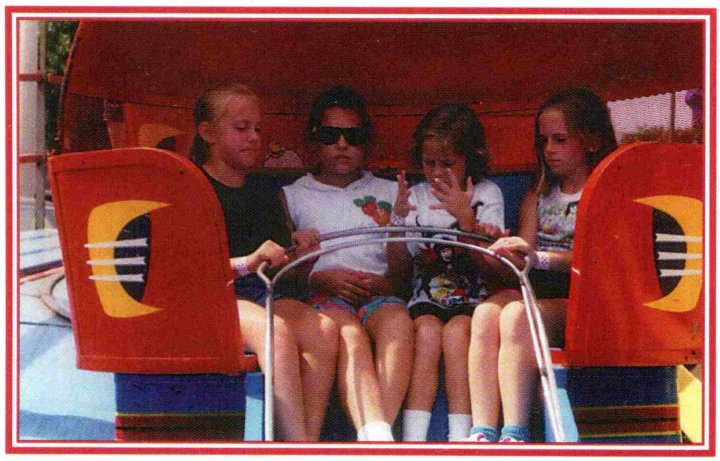
Jubilee Celebration.

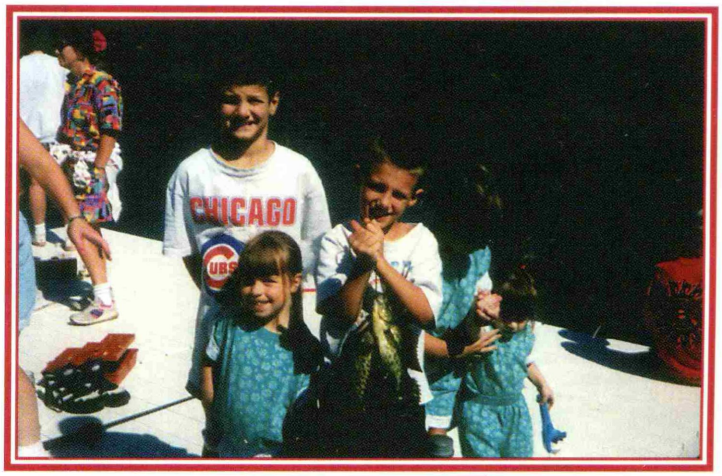


FOUNDERS AND SENIORS DAY

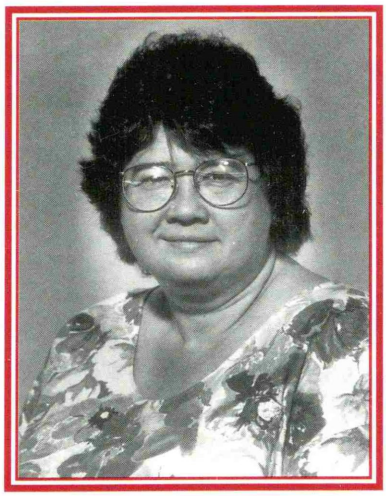
DECEMBER 8, 1994

ST. THOMAS MO-O-ORE FAMILY FUN DAYS FESTIVAL





PARISH PICNIC AT CAMP LAWRENCE IN AUGUST

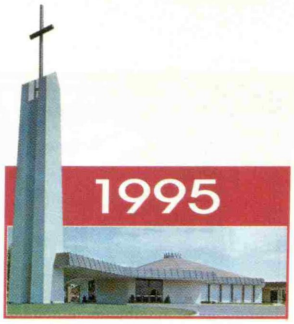


Sister Linda Kors CSC, STM graduate, 1963. She joined The Sisters of the Holy Cross - Silver Jubilee Photo.

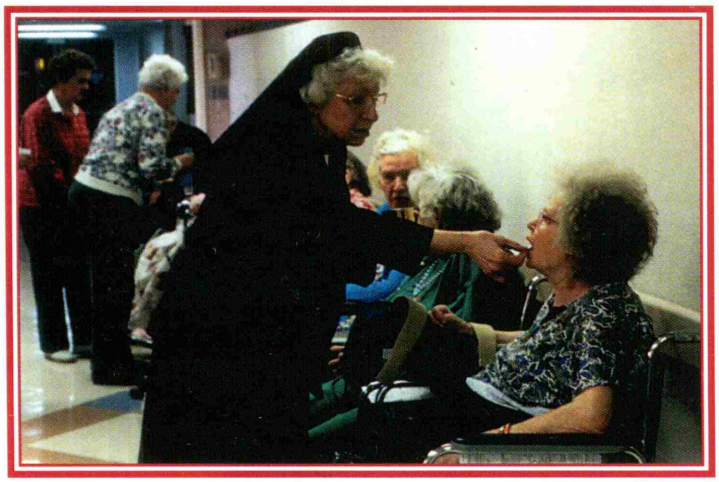
Msgr.'s birthday.

ETHNIC MASS & CELEBRATION

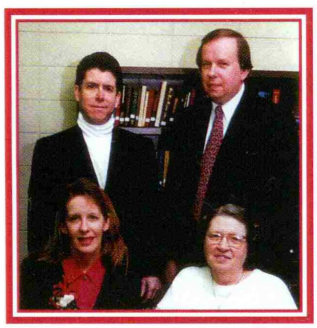
The organizers for the Ethnic Mass & Celebration.



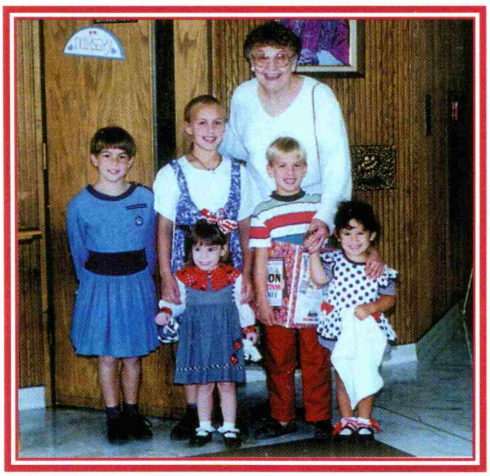
ETHNIC MASS & CELEBRATION



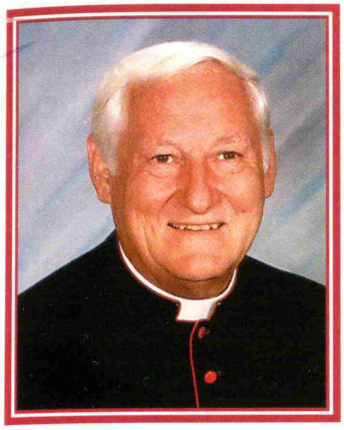
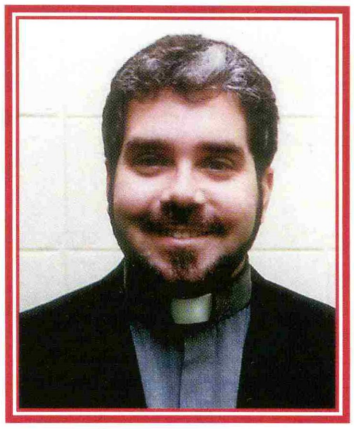
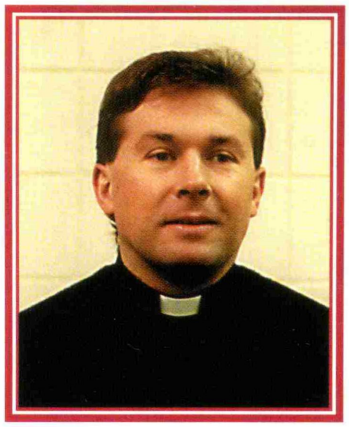
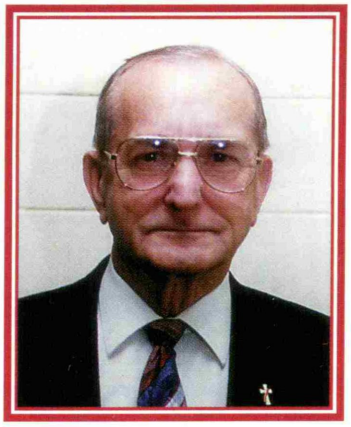
Pastoral Care faithfully serves the elderly and sick with empathy and loving care, seeing Christ in everyone.



Pastoral Council help the Pastor identify pastoral needs, plan pastoral programs and improve pastoral services.



Sunday Mass Nursery.

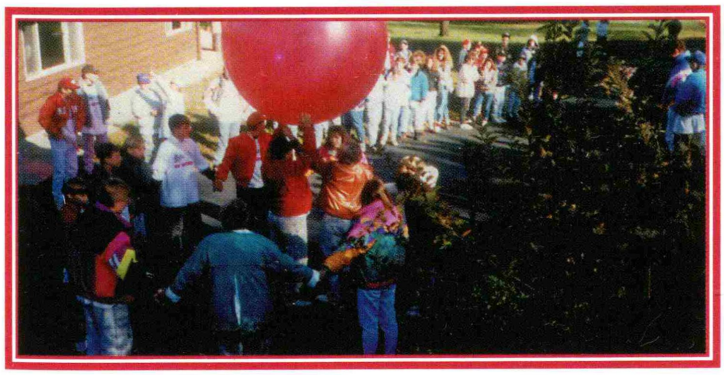
CLERGY: Msgr. Carl F. Mengeling, Pastor, Fr. Joseph A. Angotti, Fr. Andrew Malarz and Deacon Joseph Sobek.

Sisters of St. Benedict

School Administration

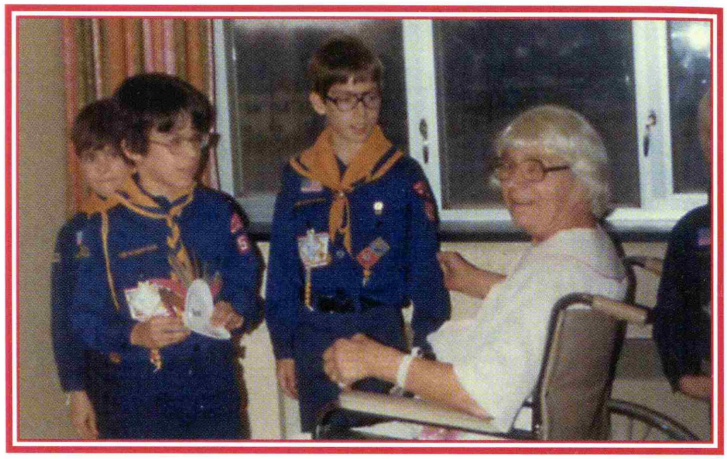
Parish Office Administration

CCD Administration



CCD Program fulfills the promise which the Church makes at every baptism: To support and instruct the baptized and to foster their growth in faith.

CCD Christmas

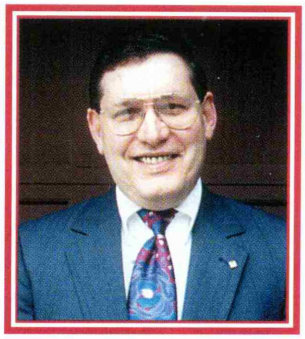


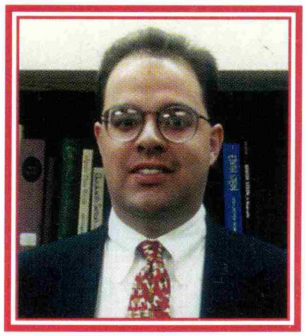
SCOUTS
Scouting offers youth opportunities to develop positive self-concepts, and to learn their limits by involvment in scouting activities .

Memorial Luncheons support bereaved families. *(above and below)*

Mom's Group - Fellowship, encouragement and knowledge among mothers.

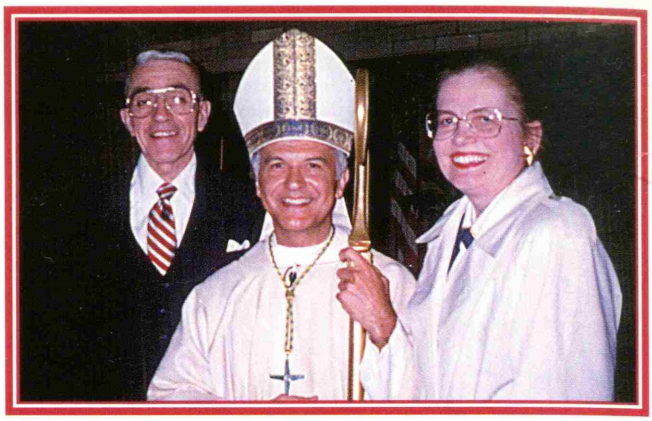
Youth Ministry invites the youth and young adults of our parish to community with one another, and to a prayerful relationship with Jesus by inviting their participation in the life and mission of our parish family.





THE MESSENGER STAFF
Provides a quarterly publication to Parish Families to keep them informed.

Youth Group in Denver *(above)* to see the Pope. Great America *(below)*.



CHRISTIAN INITIATION - Parishioners and Priests providing an experience of community as well as instructions for those desiring to become Catholic.

Knights of Columbus - Ensuring the Catholic Church remains vigorous and undiminished is one of their primary missions.

RESPECT LIFE - A gift from conception to death.

CHURCH HISTORY - The life and growth of the Church.

BLUE ARMY - Promotes the Intention of Our Lady – Prayer, Penance, and Sacrifice.

ALTAR AND ROSARY SOCIETY - Fosters the rosary devotion.

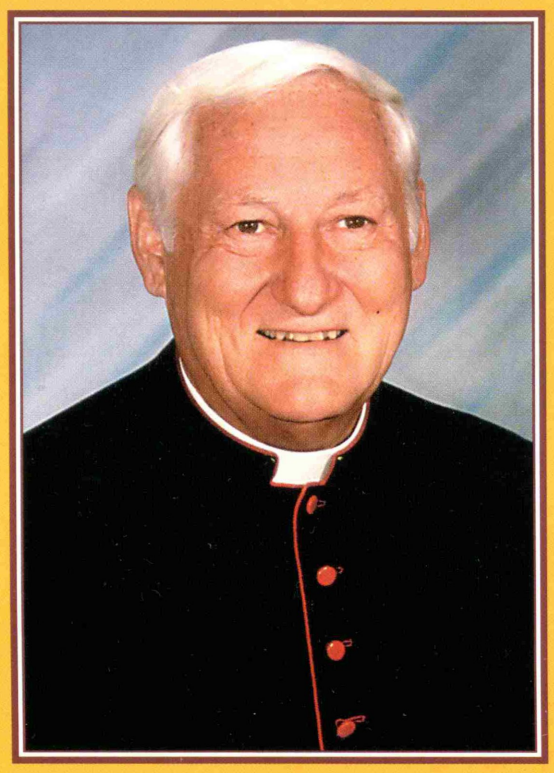
CHOIR - Sacred music to enhance liturgy.

SANCTUARY ARTISANS- Maintain the sanctuary and decorate the church.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY - Assists the needy.

HOLY NAME SOCIETY - Provides spiritual and social ideals for men of the parish.

JUBILEE COMMITTEE - Plans and implements a series of events from October 1994 - October 1995.



FIFTY YEARS HAVE PASSED!!! St. Thomas More Parish is at the crossroads of a cherished **PAST** and a hopeful **FUTURE** in a perplexing and challenging **PRESENT.**

Our faith in the **RISEN CHRIST** and the destiny He offers, inspires and energizes us in becoming a "community of believers who are of **ONE MIND** and **ONE HEART**"*(Acts 4,32)*. The Holy Father spoke of the parish as the **FAMILY** of many families United in God. For **FIFTY YEARS,** believing parishioners accepted the noble mission of becoming a parish. Their **FAITH-VISION, HOPE-OPTIMISM** and **LOVE - ACTION AS THE LORD'S PARTNERS** blossomed in a profusion of ministries, organizations and services conducted in an expanse of facilities. Countless people have encountered Christ's **TRUTH** and **LOVE** in these **FIFTY YEARS.**

Becoming a parish is a continuing endeavor for each new generation. Our agenda today is the same but the situation is different. Our agenda is always the Catholic Vision: Life in the Risen Christ, the celebration of goodness, the commitment to Christian values and our collaboration in the mission of Christ.

Our situation today, like the past, is fraught with challenges and temptations. We face a growing secularism that excludes God from human affairs! We face a clever relativism that undermines and compromises truth! We face materialistic consumerism that offers comfort at the price of inner emptiness! We face an alluring hedonism that offers pleasure that will never satisfy the human heart!

It is in this reality that our next fifty years will unfold. We are called to live the **BEATITUDES!** We are called to be the **LIGHT OF CHRIST.** We are often called to be the 'sign of contradiction' that challenges, liberates, and transforms society with truth, goodness and love. Our fidelity to our Christian vocation will awaken the conscience of society if we live the Gospel truth and are in the forefront of the struggle for authentic values. In short, Christ's message must live **IN US** and in the **WAY WE LIVE** and in the **WAY WE REFUSE TO LIVE!!!**

St. Paul charts the way for **ST. THOMAS MORE'S** future: "Conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ. May I hear about you... that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, struggling for the **FAITH** of the **GOSPEL**, not intimidated in any way." *Phil 1, 27-28.*

As authentic believers... **OUR FUTURE** is **BRIGHT!!!** This is because our **FUTURE** is assured by Divine Providence!!!

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50th anniversary, 1945-1995.

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The Jubilee Committee and St. Thomas More Parish thanks Ted Muta Advertising for donating all of their time and services necessary to design and create this 50th Anniversary Book.